

DGuzik 27 Daniel

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(Dan 1:1)

Daniel Finds Favor in Babylon

In the third¹ year of the reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar² of Babylon advanced against Jerusalem³ and laid it under siege.⁴

(Guzik)

Dan 1:1-21

DANIEL 1 - KEEPING PURE IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY

A. Introduction.

1. Setting the time: The prophet Daniel lived in the sixth century before the birth of Jesus. During this approximate period:

- Construction on the Acropolis in Athens began
- Mayan civilization flourished in Mexico
- Aesop wrote his fables
- Confucius and Buddha lived
- Greek art began to truly excel
- The Phoenicians made the first known sea journey around Africa
- The Greeks introduced the olive tree to Italy

2. The Book of Daniel has been a target of critics who doubt that the Daniel described in the book wrote the book, especially in light of the book's amazing prophecies.

a. Who wrote the Book of Daniel? It *claims* to have been written by Daniel himself, and the fact that it is written mostly in the third person does not contradict that claim.

i. The author mostly speaks in the third person, except for Dan_8:1; Dan_9:2; Dan_9:20; Dan_10:2, where he speaks in the "I, Daniel" form. However, it was customary for ancient writers to speak in the third person even

when writing about themselves. The one Old Testament exception to this is the Book of Nehemiah, which is in the form of a personal diary.

ii. Even God switches between the grammatical first and third person when speaking of Himself: compare

Exo_20:2 (*I am the LORD your God*) and Exo_20:7 (*for the LORD will not hold him guiltless*).

iii. Fortunately, Jesus takes away all doubt on the matter. *He* tells us that Daniel wrote the book of Daniel: *Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet.* (Mat_24:15; Mar_13:14) b. Daniel describes events of the second century before Jesus (especially the period 175-164 B.C.) with such precision that critics believe it *had* to have been written after that period, during the time of the Maccabees (in between the Old and New Testaments). Supposedly, the purpose for writing Daniel at that time was to inspire God's people on to victory during the Maccabean wars.

i. The first one to suggest a Maccabean date for Daniel was the Neoplatonic philosopher Porphyrius of Tyre (third century A.D.) Porphyrius couldn't believe the prophecies, so he suggested the later date. Jerome, in his commentary on Daniel, spent much of his time refuting these arguments.

ii. Beginning in 1771, influenced by the Enlightenment, academics began to revive the old Maccabean date theory about the Book of Daniel. They all agreed that every accurate prediction in Daniel was written after the events took place.

c. The modern argument for "late dating" Daniel is based on supposed inevitable mistakes that a second century B.C. writer made when writing about a period 400 years before, in the sixth century B.C. In our own day, it would be as if someone wrote a story about the Pilgrims landing at Plymouth Rock and they mentioned speedboats and computers. We

would know that it was a forgery.

d. There are usually said to be five main historical blunders:

- The “wrong date” for Nebuchadnezzar’s invasion of Judah
- Using the word “Chaldeans” to describe a class of soothsayers
- The “obviously legendary” account of Nebuchadnezzar’s madness
- King Belshazzar and his relationship to Nabonidus
- The “legendary” figure of Darius the Mede

i. There is also a linguistic argument made, claiming Greek words are used in Daniel are words that did not come into the Hebrew vocabulary until the second century B.C.

e. As we go through the Book of Daniel, we will give special attention to these issues, and what modern archaeological research has to say about them. But we should ask: why such a strong attack against the Book of Daniel? Simply because Daniel contains more fulfilled prophecies than any other book in the Bible. In New Testament prophecy, Daniel is referred to more than any other Old Testament book.

i. At times, Communist governments prohibited preaching from the Book of Daniel because it reveals God’s knowledge of the future, and it shows that in the end the LORD God and His people win.

3. (Dan_1:1-2) Nebuchadnezzar conquers Jerusalem.

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it.

And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the articles of the house of God, which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the articles into the treasure house of his god.

a. **Jehoiakim king of Judah:** This was a Judean king placed on the throne by the Pharaoh of Egypt. His name means “Yahweh raises up,” but the LORD did not raise him up at all - Pharaoh did.

b. **Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon:** This was the mighty ruler of the Babylonian Empire. The name **Nebuchadnezzar** is a Hebrew transliteration of the Babylonian name *Nebu-kudduri-utzur*, which means “Nebu protects the crown.”

c. **Came to Jerusalem and besieged it:** Why did Nebuchadnezzar come against Jerusalem? Because the Pharaoh of Egypt invaded Babylon. In response the young prince Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish, then he

pursued their fleeing army all the way down to the Sinai. Along the way (or on the way back), he subdued Jerusalem, who had been loyal to the Pharaoh of Egypt.

i. This happened in 605 B.C. and it was the first, but not the last encounter between Nebuchadnezzar and Jehoiakim. There would be two later invasions (597 and 587 B.C.).

d. Is this a historical blunder? This invasion in 605 B.C. is not mentioned in the book of Kings, but Josephus’ quotation of the Babylonian historian Berossus shows that the Biblical account of three separate Babylonian attacks on Judah is accurate (*Against Apion*, I 19; *Antiquities*, X 11, 1).

i. The Babylonian chronicles are a collection of tablets discovered as early as 1887, and are held in the British Museum. In them, Nebuchadnezzar’s 605 B.C. presence in Judah is documented and clarified.

ii. When the Babylonian chronicles were finally published in 1956, they gave us first-rate, detailed political and military information about the first 10 years of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign. L.W. King prepared these tablets in 1919;

he then died, and they were neglected for four decades.

iii. Excavations also document the victory of Nebuchadnezzar over the Egyptians at Carchemish in May or June of

605 B.C. Archaeologists found evidences of battle, vast quantities of arrowheads, layers of ash, and a shield of a Greek mercenary fighting for the Egyptians.

iv. This campaign was interrupted suddenly when Nebuchadnezzar heard of his father's death and raced back to

Babylon to secure his succession to the throne. He traveled about 500 miles in two weeks - remarkable speed.

v. The siege of Jerusalem in 605 B.C. was cut short by Nebuchadnezzar's return to Babylon. This is not specifically detailed in the Babylonian Chronicles, but it is entirely consistent with the record.

e. **In the third year of the reign:** There is also no contradiction between Daniel, who says this happened in the **third year of** Jehoiakim, and Jer_46:2, which says it was *in the fourth year of Jehoiakim*. Daniel reckoned a king's years after the Babylonian method: the first year of a king's reign begins at the start of the calendar year *after* he takes the throne.

Jeremiah uses the Jewish method.

i. "It was customary for the Babylonians to consider the first year of a king's reign as the year of accession and to call the next year the first year . . . Having spent most of his life in Babylon, it is only natural that Daniel should use a Babylonian form of chronology." (Walvoord)

f. **And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand:** In this 597 B.C. deportation, **Jehoiakim**, Ezekiel and others were taken away. This deportation is described in 2Ki_24:14-16.

i. Though Judah is conquered, God's hand is obvious; He is in command. This was prophesied in Isa_39:7 : *And they shall take away some of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon*. This prophecy leads some to think Daniel and his companions were made eunuchs. Certainly, the Hebrew term *saris* was used of literal eunuchs;

but the word derives from a phrase that simply means to be a servant of the king. It wasn't exclusively applied to literal eunuchs.

ii. Why did the LORD give Judah into the hands of the Babylonians? The two main reasons for the captivity were Israel's idolatry, and their failure to observe the sabbaths for the land (Lev_25:1-7 and Lev_26:2-35). This shows that God always settles accounts with those who refuse to respond to His warnings. In the 587 B.C. invasion, the city of Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed (2Ki_25:9-10).

g. **Some of the articles of the house of God:** Nebuchadnezzar did not take *all* the furnishings of the temple, only **some**. The rest were either hidden before Nebuchadnezzar came or brought to Babylon later.

i. The confiscation of these items and their deposit in a Babylonian temple was a dramatic declaration by Nebuchadnezzar saying, "my god is better than your God." Was the God of Israel able to vindicate Himself?

ii. This was a low time for Judah and God's people. It seemed that the God of Israel lost out to the gods of Assyria, Egypt, and Babylon. The Book of Daniel shows God vindicating Himself at a time when the conquest of Israel might have brought His reputation into disrepute.

B. Babylon's system of indoctrination.

1. (Dan_1:3-4) The best and the brightest of Jerusalem's young men are chosen and taken to Babylon.

Then the king instructed Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, to bring some of the children of Israel and some of the king's descendants and some of the nobles, young men in whom *there was* no blemish, but good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who *had* ability to serve in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the language and literature of the Chaldeans.

a. **Bring some of the children of Israel:** Nebuchadnezzar not only confiscated holy things from the temple, but the

shining lights of Judah's future as well (young men perhaps 13-17 years old).

i. Walvoord on the phrase **king's descendants**: "The Hebrew for *the princes* is a Persian word, *partemim*, which is cited as another proof for a late date of Daniel. However, inasmuch as Daniel lived in his latter years under Persian government as a high official, there is nothing strange about an occasional Persian word."

b. **Who had the ability to serve in the king's palace**: Nebuchadnezzar showed himself a wise administrator, and a shrewd tactician. Taking these young men as hostages reminded the people back in Jerusalem that they should not revolt against recently imposed Babylonian rule.

2. (Dan_1:5-7) In Babylon, the Hebrew youths are groomed for the civil service.

And the king appointed for them a daily provision of the king's delicacies and of the wine which he drank, and three years of training for them, so that at the end of *that time* they might serve before the king. Now from among those of the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. To them the chief of the eunuchs gave names: he gave Daniel *the name* Belteshazzar; to Hananiah, Shadrach; to Mishael, Meshach; and to Azariah, Abed-Nego.

a. **The king appointed for them a daily provision of the king's delicacies**: It was a given that the Babylonian government would provide for these young men in training. Yet, to have the same food and wine prepared for the king was intended as a special honor.

i. In the ancient world much more than the modern world, there was a huge difference between the food enjoyed by the elite and what common people ate.

b. **To them the chief of the eunuchs gave names**: Daniel tells us of four of these youths, and their new Babylonian names.

i. The name **Daniel** (meaning *God is my judge*) was changed to **Belteshazzar** (meaning *Bel's prince*).

ii. The name **Hannaniah** (meaning *Beloved by the LORD*) was changed to **Shadrach** (meaning *Illumined by Sun-god*).

iii. The name **Mishael** (meaning *Who is as God*) was changed to **Meshach** (meaning *Who is like Venus*).

iv. The name **Azariah** (meaning *The LORD is my help*) was changed to **Abed-Nego** (meaning *Servant of Nego*).

c. **Three years of training for them:** The purpose of the food, names and education was simple. This was an effort at total indoctrination, working to make these young Jewish men leave behind their Hebrew God and culture. Undoubtedly, Nebuchadnezzar wanted to communicate to these young men, “look to *me* for everything.” Daniel and his friends refused, insisting that they look to God.

i. Calvin wrote that Nebuchadnezzar knew that the Jews were a stiff-necked and obstinate people, and that he used the sumptuous food to soften up the captives.

ii. Satan uses a similar strategy against believers today, wanting to indoctrinate us into the world system. Satan wants us to:

- Feed on what the world offers
- Identify (“name”) ourselves in reference to the world
- Educate ourselves in the ways of the world

3. (Dan_1:8) Daniel’s decision to be faithful.

But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

a. **That he would not defile himself:** The ancient Hebrew word **defile** carries the thought of *polluting* or *staining* (see also Isa_59:3, Zep_3:1, and Mal_1:7). That Daniel **requested** that he might not **defile himself** implies that he explained the *spiritual* basis for his request. He didn’t make it seem that he wanted to avoid the king’s food out of other reasons.

i. **Therefore he requested:** Isn’t Daniel making a big deal over a little thing? Yes, but the only way to go on with God is

by being faithful in little things. We might ask, “Daniel, why bring religion into it?” But Daniel realized that his relationship with God touched every area of his life, even what he ate. Significantly, the very root of sin goes back to eating forbidden food.

b. **That he might not defile himself:** Why did Daniel and his friends consider the king’s food defiled? First, it undoubtedly was not kosher. Second, it was probably sacrificed to idols. Third, it implied fellowship with Babylon’s cultural system.

i. Daniel did not object to the name given to him, because he knew whom he was - you could call him what you liked. Daniel did not object to the Babylonian education, because he knew what he believed. Daniel did object to the food from the king’s table, because to eat it was direct disobedience to God’s word.

ii. “By eastern standards to share a meal was to commit one’s self to friendship; it was of covenant significance.” (Baldwin)

iii. **Nor with the wine which he drank:** God did not forbid drinking **wine**. Nevertheless, in pagan cultures most wine and meat was dedicated to the gods, so Daniel refused it.

c. **Therefore he requested:** Daniel made a remarkably courageous decision, especially when we think of all the reasons why it was a hard decision to make.

i. The *king* ordered the menu. Rejecting the menu was rejecting the king, and could result in severe punishment.

ii. Refusing the food might have branded them as being *uncooperative*, and *spoiled all chances of advancement* (many other Hebrew youths *did* eat the food).

iii. There was a *real threat of punishment*. Ancient kings were well known for the severe and often sadistic punishments against those who crossed them. Nebuchadnezzar was capable of great cruelty. He murdered the sons

of one king of Judah before the king's eyes; then immediately gouged out the eyes of the king, so his last memory

would always be the murder of his sons (Jer_39:6-7). Other rulers of Judah were literally roasted to death over a fire (Jer_29:22).

iv. The *food itself* was no doubt pretty attractive, and seemed a much better alternative than eating a vegetarian diet and water for three years.

v. Mere *distance* made this challenging. Separated from family and home, it was easy to compromise.

vi. It was easy to *think that God had let them down* by allowing them to be carried away into Babylon. Why should they risk their necks for a God who let them down? Many Christians have a mentality that says, "God, you do right by me, and I'll do right by you." Of course, God *will* always do right by us; but we don't always *know* what is right for us.

d. **Daniel purposed in his heart:** In this, Daniel illustrates how to conquer a difficult trial and glorify God before others in the midst of testing.

i. First, *the heart must be set*. Daniel **purposed in his heart**, making up his mind *beforehand* that he would not compromise.

ii. The *life must be winning*. Daniel found favor with his superiors.

iii. *Protest must be courteous* - Daniel **requested**. He made a polite request, showing discretion. Making a stand for Jesus Christ does not mean we must be obnoxious.

iv. *Self-denial must be sought*. Daniel and his friends knew this would *cost* them something, yet they were willing.

"Be ready for a bad name; be willing to be called a bigot; be prepared for the loss of friendships; be prepared for anything so long as you can stand fast by Him who bought you with His precious blood." (Spurgeon)

v. The *test must be boldly put*. "I think that a Christian man should be willing to be tried; he should be pleased to let his

religion be put to the test. 'There,' says he, 'hammer away if you like.' Do you want to be carried to heaven on a feather bed? Do you want always to be protected from everybody's sneer and frown; and to go to heaven as if you were riding in the procession on Lord Mayor's day?" (Spurgeon)

C. The results of Daniel's courageous decision.

1. (Dan_1:9) God gives Daniel **favor and goodwill** with the authorities.

Now God had brought Daniel into the favor and goodwill of the chief of the eunuchs.

a. **God had brought Daniel into the favor:** God will never abandon us when we stand for Him. Daniel entrusted himself to God, and God came through - though it was no doubt a stretching experience for Daniel and his friends.

b. **Into the favor and goodwill of the chief:** God moved upon the authorities so they would regard Daniel with **goodwill**; but God also worked through the wise actions of Daniel to cultivate this goodwill.

2. (Dan_1:10-13) Daniel suggests a plan.

And the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear my lord the king, who has appointed your food and drink. For why should he see your faces looking worse than the young men who *are* your age? Then you would endanger my head before the king." So Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, "Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink. "Then let our appearance be examined before you, and the appearance of the young men who eat the portion of the king's delicacies; and as you see fit, so deal with your servants."

a. **Please test your servants:** Daniel saw the situation through the steward's eyes, and addressed his legitimate concerns. He wouldn't let the chief of the eunuchs pay the

price for Daniel's conscience. In it all, Daniel was willing to put himself and his faith in God to the test.

i. There is something so *reasonable* about Daniel's approach. He could have gone on a hunger strike; he could have started throwing over banquet tables. Instead he made a polite request, made it to the right person and said, "Put us to the test."

ii. In this sense we might say that Daniel made a godly and wise *compromise* with the **chief of the eunuchs**. He certainly did not compromise in an ungodly way, but he showed the wisdom Jam_3:17 speaks about: *But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.*

iii. "Martyrs by proxy, who have such strong convictions that they think it somebody else's duty to run risk for them, are by no means unknown." (Maclaren)

iv. "It is of no use for a man to say, 'I have made up my mind upon certain things,' and to keep doggedly fighting over those matters, while, at the same time, the whole of his life is unkind, ungenerous, and unlovable. Yes, by all manner of means be a martyr if you like; but do not martyr everybody else." (Spurgeon)

b. Vegetables to eat and water to drink: Vegetables refers to all kinds of grains and plants, not strictly vegetables.

Basically, this was a vegetarian diet, chosen because none of the meat was butchered in a kosher manner or was sacrificed to idols.

i. Was Daniel presumptuous or testing God when he put God to the test? Not at all, because he had both a command to obey and a promise to trust. Exo_23:25 says, *So you shall serve the LORD your God, and He will bless your bread and your water.*

3. (Dan_1:14-16) Daniel and his companions are blessed for their faithfulness.

So he consented with them in this matter, and tested them ten days. And at the end of ten days their features appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king's delicacies. Thus the steward took away their portion of delicacies and the wine that they were to drink, and gave them vegetables.

a. **So he consented with them in this matter:** This was the hand of God at work. The chief of the eunuchs had all the "power" in this situation; Daniel and his friends seemed to be completely at his mercy. Yet God moved upon this man, and **he consented with them in this matter.**

b. **Their features appeared better and fatter:** This was the hand of God at work. There was no *biological* reason why a vegetarian diet should make them appear **better and fatter**. Perhaps their diet would have made them appear the *same* as the other Jewish young men who ate the king's food, but not **better and fatter**.

4. (Dan_1:17-21) Daniel and his companions are blessed and promoted.

As for these four young men, God gave them knowledge and skill in all literature and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams. Now at the end of the days, when the king had said that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. Then the king interviewed them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; therefore they served before the king. And in all matters of wisdom *and* understanding about which the king examined them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians *and* astrologers who *were* in all his realm.

Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus.

a. **God gave them knowledge and skill:** The special intellectual ability of Daniel and his companions was not due to their diet, but to the special intervention of the LORD.

i. Some think their diet had a direct effect on their knowledge. Trapp says, “This slender diet was some help to their studies; for loaden bellies make leaden wits.” Nevertheless, surely the key was *spiritual*.

ii. These young Jewish men *gave themselves to the LORD* in a remarkable way and God *blessed them* in a remarkable way. J. Edwin Orr remembered something Billy Brice said to him: “Edwin, if Christians would only give over and above their reasonable service, the Lord would give over and above the usual blessing.” Daniel and his friends understood this principle, and God blessed them for acting on it.

b. Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams: This shows that purity of heart and faithfulness to God come before enlightenment in divine mysteries. Daniel will later receive great revelation, but now he simply shows himself a dedicated follower of God.

c. None was found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: These young men from Jerusalem were immersed in the study of Babylonian culture, literature and religion; yet they remained faithful to God. The work of the prophets like Jeremiah, Zephaniah and Habakkuk had not been in vain. They were *in* Babylon, but not *of* Babylon.

i. We can infer that Daniel and his friends were well trained by their parents. We must train our children this way.

d. Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus: Daniel had a long, successful career in the worst of circumstances. He worked for tyrants who thought nothing of killing their staff and advisors, much less firing them. His employer suffered the worst kind of hostile takeover when the Medo-Persian Empire conquered the Babylonian Empire. The seeds of his great success are evident in the very first chapter of the Book of Daniel.

i. Daniel and his friends show us that inner conviction can overcome *any* outer pressure, and that God-honoring convictions yield God-given rewards.

(Dan 1:2) Now the Lord⁵ delivered⁶ King Jehoiakim of Judah into his power,⁷ along with some of the vessels⁸ of the temple of God.⁹ He brought them to the land of Babylonia¹⁰ to the temple of his god¹¹ and put¹² the vessels in the treasury of his god.

(Dan 1:3) The king commanded¹³ Ashpenaz,¹⁴ who was in charge of his court officials,¹⁵ to choose¹⁶ some of the Israelites who were of royal and noble descent¹⁷ — (Dan 1:4) young men in whom there was no physical defect and who were handsome,¹⁸ well versed in all kinds of wisdom, well educated¹⁹ and having keen insight,²⁰ and who were capable²¹ of entering the king's royal service²² — and to teach them the literature and language²³ of the Babylonians.²⁴

(Dan 1:5) So the king assigned them a daily ration²⁵ from his royal delicacies²⁶ and from the wine he himself drank. They were to be trained²⁷ for the next three years. At the end of that time they were to enter the king's service.²⁸

(Dan 1:6) As it turned out,²⁹ among these young men³⁰ were some from Judah:³¹ Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.³²

(Dan 1:7) But the overseer of the court officials renamed them. He gave³³ Daniel the name Belteshazzar, Hananiah he named Shadrach, Mishael he named Meshach, and Azariah he named Abednego.³⁴

(Dan 1:8) But Daniel made up his mind³⁵ that he would not defile³⁶ himself with the royal delicacies or the royal wine.³⁷ He therefore asked the overseer of the court officials for permission not to defile himself.

(Dan 1:9) Then God made the overseer of the court officials sympathetic to Daniel.³⁸

(Dan 1:10) But he³⁹ responded to Daniel, "I fear my master the king. He is the one who has decided⁴⁰ your food and drink. What would happen if he saw that you looked malnourished in comparison to the other young men your

age?⁴¹ If that happened,⁴² you would endanger my life⁴³ with the king!"

(Dan 1:11) Daniel then spoke to the warden⁴⁴ whom the overseer of the court officials had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: (Dan 1:12) "Please test your servants for ten days by providing us with some vegetables to eat and water to drink.

(Dan 1:13) Then compare our appearance⁴⁵ with that of⁴⁶ the young men who are eating the royal delicacies;⁴⁷ deal with us⁴⁸ in light of what you see."

(Dan 1:14) So the warden⁴⁹ agreed to their proposal⁵⁰ and tested them for ten⁵¹ days.

(Dan 1:15) At the end of the ten days their appearance was better and their bodies were healthier⁵² than all the young men who had been eating the royal delicacies.

(Dan 1:16) So the warden removed the delicacies and the wine⁵³ from their diet⁵⁴ and gave them a diet of vegetables instead.

(Dan 1:17) Now as for these four young men, God endowed them with knowledge and skill in all sorts of literature and wisdom — and Daniel had insight into all kinds of visions and dreams.

(Dan 1:18) When the time appointed by the king arrived,⁵⁵ the overseer of the court officials brought them into Nebuchadnezzar's presence.

(Dan 1:19) When the king spoke with them, he did not find among the entire group⁵⁶ anyone like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, or Azariah.

So they entered the king's service.⁵⁷

(Dan 1:20) In every matter of wisdom and⁵⁸ insight the king asked them about, he found them to be ten times⁵⁹ better than any of the magicians and astrologers that were in his entire empire.

(Dan 1:21) Now Daniel lived on until the first⁶⁰ year of Cyrus the king.

(Dan 2:1) ***Nebuchadnezzar Has a Disturbing Dream***

In the second year of his¹ reign Nebuchadnezzar had many dreams.² His mind³ was disturbed and he suffered from insomnia.⁴

(Guzik)

Dan 2:1-49

DANIEL 2 - NEBUCHADNEZZAR DREAMS OF AN IMAGE

A. Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

1. (Dan_2:1) The troubling dream.

Now in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Nebuchadnezzar had dreams; and his spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him.

a. **In the second year:** Some commentators say this happened while Daniel was in his three-year training course; others say that it was soon after he was finished.

i. By Babylonian reckoning, the year 602 B.C. could be both the second year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign and after three years of training for the Hebrew youths.

b. **His spirit was so troubled that his sleep left him:** There was something disturbing about this dream and Nebuchadnezzar knew that it was unusually significant.

2. (Dan_2:2-9) Nebuchadnezzar demands to know the dream and its interpretation from his wise men.

Then the king gave the command to call the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans to tell the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. And the king said to them, "I have had a dream, and my spirit is anxious to know the dream." Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in Aramaic, "O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will give the interpretation." The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, "My decision is firm: if you do not make known the dream to me, and its interpretation, you shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made an ash heap. However, if you tell the dream and its interpretation, you shall receive from me gifts, rewards, and great honor. Therefore tell me the dream and

its interpretation.” They answered again and said, “Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will give its interpretation.” The king answered and said, “I know for certain that you would gain time, because you see that my decision is firm: if you do not make known the dream to me, *there is only* one decree for you! For you have agreed to speak lying and corrupt words before me till the time has changed. Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can give me its interpretation.”

a. **Make known the dream to me:** It is hard to say if Nebuchadnezzar really remembered the dream or not. Perhaps he had a sense of it, but had only vague remembrance of the details.

b. **Therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that you can give me its interpretation:** Nebuchadnezzar had no criteria by which to judge the accuracy of the interpretation of the dream by his wise men, but he could test their ability to tell what he dreamed.

i. Despite their protests, Nebuchadnezzar wasn’t asking too much of these **magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers**, and the **Chaldeans**. These men made their living on their supposed ability to contact the gods and gain secrets from the spirit realm. If they were in reality what they presented themselves as in image, they should be able to tell Nebuchadnezzar both the dream and its interpretation.

c. **You shall be cut in pieces:** The harsh threat of Nebuchadnezzar and the method of execution he describes are both perfectly consistent with an ancient eastern monarch.

i. Archer describes one method of dismemberment: the victim was tied to four trees with a rope at each limb. The trees were bent inwards and tied together at the top; then the top rope was cut and the body was snapped into four pieces.

d. **The Chaldeans:** In this verse we have the first mention of **Chaldeans** as a class of soothsayers to the king. Critics cite the use of this word as a mistake that only a second century B.C. writer would make. Critics suppose that in Daniel's day, the term **Chaldean** was *only* used as a racial designation, describing what the Chaldeans thought was the "master race"

who ruled Nebuchadnezzar's superpower empire.

i. But linguistic research has demonstrated that the Babylonian word for an astrologer-priest, and their word for their supposed master race were homonyms, both having the sound **Chaldean** (*kas-du* in Babylonian), but each retaining their own meaning. This is the same way that the English sound *tu* can mean *to*, *two*, or *too*.

ii. Daniel's understanding of this is clear from the text, because he *also* uses the term **Chaldean** in its racial sense (Dan_3:8 and Dan_5:30).

e. From Dan_2:4 to Dan_7:28, the text is in Aramaic - not Hebrew. This is the only section of the Bible written in Aramaic.

This was the language of the Babylonian Empire.

3. (Dan_2:10-11) The wise men explain the impossibility of Nebuchadnezzar's request.

The Chaldeans answered the king, and said, "There is not a man on earth who can tell the king's matter; therefore no king, lord, or ruler has *ever* asked such things of any magician, astrologer, or Chaldean. *It is* a difficult thing that the king requests, and there is no other who can tell it to the king except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh."

a. **There is not a man on earth who can tell the king's matter:** When the Chaldeans say this they admit that true revelation comes from God down to man; it is not the *achievement* of man.

i. Despite all their wisdom - real and imagined - these wise men had no answer for Nebuchadnezzar, because only *God* could bring and answer to the king.

ii. “They were like some modern ministers of our own day who spend their time studying philosophy, psychiatry, psychology, social science, political science, and then continue under the pretense of being God’s messengers to men.” (Strauss)

b. No king, lord, or ruler has ever asked such things:

The strategy of the wise men was to convince the king that he was unreasonable, not that they were incompetent.

c. Except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh:

As far as these pagan magicians, astrologers, and wise men knew, this was true. They did not know what we know so plainly in Jesus - that He is *Immanuel, God with us* (Mat_1:23).

4. (Dan_2:12-13) A furious Nebuchadnezzar sentences all his wise men to death.

For this reason the king was angry and very furious, and gave a command to destroy all the wise *men* of Babylon. So the decree went out, and they began killing the wise *men*; and they sought Daniel and his companions, to kill *them*.

a. The king was angry and very furious: Though he was a despot, Nebuchadnezzar knew that false religious is worse than useless. He knew that it was a curse, and he didn’t want “wise men” who could not bring him wisdom from God.

b. Gave a command to destroy all the wise men of Babylon: As a new king, Nebuchadnezzar also perhaps used the situation to test the suitability of his father’s old advisors. The dream provided him with a good reason to clean house.

B. God reveals the dream to Daniel.

1. (Dan_2:14-16) Daniel reacts to Nebuchadnezzar’s decree by asking for a brief extension.

Then with counsel and wisdom Daniel answered Arioch, the captain of the king’s guard, who had gone out to kill the wise *men* of Babylon; he answered and said to Arioch the king’s captain, “Why is the decree from the king so urgent?” Then Arioch made the decision known to Daniel. So Daniel

went in and asked the king to give him time, that he might tell the king the interpretation.

a. **With counsel and wisdom Daniel answered Arioch:**

Daniel is obviously innocent in all this, yet he calmly and discretely deals with the crisis. Daniel's calmness in this crisis showed what kind of man he really was. In one sense, crises do not *make* the man, they *reveal* the man.

b. **Asked the king to give him time:** This wasn't just a stalling tactic. Daniel knew that it takes time to listen to the Lord and to wait upon Him, and Daniel was willing to take the time if the king would grant it.

2. (Dan_2:17-18) Daniel asks his companions for prayer.

Then Daniel went to his house, and made the decision known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions, that they might seek mercies from the God of heaven concerning this secret, so that Daniel and his companions might not perish with the rest of the wise *men* of Babylon.

a. **That they might seek mercies from the God of heaven:** Daniel was in the type of situation where only God could meet his need. Therefore he knew how important it was for both him and his companions to pray.

i. The battle was won when Daniel prayed with his friends. "It is a privilege to have praying friends" (Barnes); "In prayer meetings such as this history has been made." (Strauss)

b. **Concerning this secret:** Daniel had confidence that God could do an unprecedented miracle. Joseph had interpreted dreams with God's help, but had not reconstructed the dreams.

c. **Might not perish:** Considering what was at stake, there is little doubt that their prayers were extremely earnest. God listens to earnest prayer.

3. (Dan_2:19) God reveals Nebuchadnezzar's dream and its interpretation to Daniel.

Then the secret was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. So Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

a. **The secret was revealed to Daniel:** This was not *religion*, but *revelation*. Daniel did not find it out, God **revealed** it to him.

i. Christianity begins with the principle of *revelation*. What we know about God is what He has *revealed* to us. We do actively seek Him, but we seek what He has *revealed*. Our job isn't to figure things out about God, but to understand what He has revealed to us.

b. **In a night vision:** We don't know exactly what this is. It may have been a dream, or a supernatural vision that happened at night.

4. (Dan_2:20-23) Daniel praises God for this revelation.

Daniel answered and said: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His. And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding. He reveals deep and secret things; He knows what *is* in the darkness, and light dwells with Him. I thank You and praise You, O God of my fathers; You have given me wisdom and might, and have now made known to me what we asked of You, for You have made known to us the king's demand."

a. **He changes . . . He removes . . . He knows:** Daniel praises God for His power and might. Daniel thinks of how God is in command of all things, and how God is mightier than a mighty king like Nebuchadnezzar.

b. **He gives . . . He reveals:** Daniel praises God for His *communication* to man. All God's power and might were of little help to Daniel if God stayed silent. Daniel is grateful that God has revealed His great knowledge.

c. **You have given . . . You have made known to us:** Daniel had the certainty of faith to believe that God gave him the answer, even before confirming it before Nebuchadnezzar yet.

i. Our level of faith is often indicated by how long it takes us to start praising God. If we won't praise Him until the answer

is in hand, then we don't have much faith. Greater faith is able to praise God when the *promise* is given and received.

C. The dream of Nebuchadnezzar and its interpretation.

1. (Dan_2:24-30) Daniel is ushered into the king's presence, and gives glory to God for revealing the dream.

Therefore Daniel went to Arioch, whom the king had appointed to destroy the wise *men* of Babylon. He went and said thus to him: "Do not destroy the wise *men* of Babylon; take me before the king, and I will tell the king the interpretation." Then Arioch quickly brought Daniel before the king, and said thus to him, "I have found a man of the captives of Judah, who will make known to the king the interpretation." The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name *was* Belteshazzar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and its interpretation?" Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, "The secret which the king has demanded, the wise *men*, the astrologers, the magicians, and the soothsayers cannot declare to the king. But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream, and the visions of your head upon your bed, were these: As for you, O king, thoughts came *to your mind while* on your bed, *about* what would come to pass after this; and He who reveals secrets has made known to you what will be. But as for me, this secret has not been revealed to me because I have more wisdom than anyone living, but for *our* sakes who make known the interpretation to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your heart.

a. **I have a found a man:** Arioch tries to glorify himself and Daniel for the answer to the king's dream. But Daniel refused to take credit, recognizing that the credit went to God, who revealed this dream to Daniel.

b. **What will be in the latter days:** Nebuchadnezzar's dream didn't just concern himself for his kingdom, but the

whole span of the future - which was to Nebuchadnezzar **the latter days**.

2. (Dan_2:31-35) Daniel describes Nebuchadnezzar's dream. "You, O king, were watching; and behold, a great image! This great image, whose splendor *was* excellent, stood before you; and its form *was* awesome. This image's head *was* of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth."

a. **Behold, a great image:** Daniel's description is clear. This is a massive and spectacular **image** made of different materials (**fine gold . . . silver . . . bronze . . . iron . . . partly of iron and partly of clay**).

i. The materials descended in value from top to bottom, with **gold** at the top and **iron** mixed with **clay** at the bottom.

b. **Broke them in pieces:** This spectacular image is destroyed by a **stone** made **without hands**, and what remains of it is blown away like worthless chaff, while the stone **became a great mountain and filled the whole earth**.

3. (Dan_2:36-45) The interpretation of the dream.

"This *is* the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. You, O king, *are* a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given *them* into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all; you *are* this head of gold. But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of

bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, *that kingdom* will break in pieces and crush all the others. Whereas you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; yet the strength of the iron shall be in it, just as you saw the iron mixed with ceramic clay. And *as* the toes of the feet *were* partly of iron and partly of clay, *so* the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile. As you saw iron mixed with ceramic clay, they will mingle with the seed of men; but they will not adhere to one another, just as iron does not mix with clay. And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

Inasmuch as you saw that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God has made known to the king what will come to pass after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure."

a. **Now we will tell the interpretation:** Daniel first accurately reported the *content* of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. This gave Daniel credibility when explaining what the dream *meant*, **the interpretation**.

b. **You are the head of gold:** Nebuchadnezzar is clearly said to be the head of gold. After him will come three other kingdoms, each represented by the different materials Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream. After the succession of kingdoms, then the final kingdom set up by God.

i. "Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom was likened unto gold because it was an *absolute* monarchy, God's ideal government. Nebuchadnezzar was not, however, God's ideal monarch!" (Talbot)

c. The fulfillment of this prophecy in history.

i. Three dominating empires came after Babylon: Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. The nature of these empires is accurately reflected by the nature of the image Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream.

ii. The empires succeeding Babylon were inferior to Nebuchadnezzar's **head of gold** in the sense of their centralization of absolute power. Nebuchadnezzar was an absolute monarch, the succeeding empires progressively less so. They were larger and lasted longer than Babylon, but none held as much centralized power as Nebuchadnezzar did.

iii. "Babylon, the head of *gold*, was an absolute autocracy. Persia, a monarchical oligarchy with the nobles equal to the king in all but office, is represented by *silver*. Greece is set forth by *brass*, indicated the still lower value of its aristocracy of mind and influence . . . Rome, a democratic imperialism, with military dominion dependent upon the choice of army and citizenry and administered in the spirit of martial law, is set forth by *iron*." (Newell) iv. The third kingdom, of bronze, is the one **which shall rule over the whole earth**. Indeed, Alexander's Grecian Empire was the largest among those compared in the image (except the final government of the Messiah).

v. The Babylonian Empire stood for 66 years; the Medo-Persian Empire for 208 years; the Grecian Empire for 185 years, and the Roman Empire stood for more than 500 years.

vi. Liberal commentators do not believe that the fourth kingdom is Rome, but they say it is Greece, and that the second and third kingdoms are Media and Persia respectively, instead of the Medo-Persian Empire as a whole. They interpret this way because they believe it was impossible for Daniel to predict the rise of these empires.

d. **In the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed:** This describes the fulfillment of this prophecy in the future. The stone cut **without hands** shatters a confederation of

kings, represented by the feet of the image, and then God's Kingdom dominates the earth.

i. Since Roman history provides no fulfillment of this federation of kings (which seems to number ten, because of the number of toes, and passages like Dan_7:24 and Rev_17:12) this prophecy must still be future.

ii. Since the fall of the Roman Empire, there has never been a world-dominating empire equal to Rome. Many have tried - the Huns, Islam, the so-called Holy Roman Empire, Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin - but none have succeeded.

Each of these had amazing power and influence, but nothing compared to that of the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire, in some form or another, will be revived under the leadership of the final fallen dictator, the Antichrist.

iii. **It broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold:** This describes a single, decisive event that shatters the image representing the glory of man's rule on earth. Since the Church or the gospel have not, in a single decisive event, shattered the reign of human kingdoms, this event is still in the *future*.

iv. This isn't the gradual salvation of the world by the church; "Smashing is not salvation. Crushing is not conversion. Destroying is not delivering nor is pulverizing the same as purification." (Heslop)

vi. This stone cut **without hands** is the Messiah, not the Church. Psa_118:22, Isa_8:14, Isa_28:16, and Zec_3:9 also refer to Jesus as a stone.

vii. Therefore, the final superpower of the world is thought to be a "revival" of the Roman Empire, a continuation of the image. This will be the final world empire that the returning Jesus will conquer over.

e. **The kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile:** This final world empire will be according to the nature of clay mixed with iron. It will have more the *image* of true strength than the *substance* of strength.

i. As a whole, the image accurately represents human power and empire. The image *seems* invincible, but is actually unstable at its base. No wonder one blow to the foundation can topple the whole thing!

ii. It's also significant to see that the image describes *devolution*, not *evolution*. Instead of man beginning in the dust and evolving into gold, this vision declares that man's dominion begins with gold and devalues into dust.

iii. Some 40 years from this, Daniel had a vision describing the same succession of empires. Daniel saw it from God's perspective, and Nebuchadnezzar saw it from man's perspective. Nebuchadnezzar saw these empires as an impressive image; Daniel saw them as fierce beasts.

f. The dream is certain, and its interpretation is sure:

This wasn't Daniel guessing or thinking - this was God announcing the future. The only reason that God can predict history is because he can control it.

4. (Dan_2:46-49) Nebuchadnezzar's reaction to Daniel's reporting of the dream and its interpretation.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face, prostrate before Daniel, and commanded that they should present an offering and incense to him. The king answered Daniel, and said, "Truly your God *is* the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret." Then the king promoted Daniel and gave him many great gifts; and he made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief administrator over all the wise *men* of Babylon. Also Daniel petitioned the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego over the affairs of the province of Babylon; but Daniel *sat* in the gate of the king.

a. Nebuchadnezzar fell on his face: This great king was obviously impressed. He wasn't in the custom of showing such respect to anyone, especially a foreign slave who was about to be executed with the rest of the wise men. This confirms that Daniel accurately reported the dream and skillfully explained its meaning.

b. **Your God is the God of gods:** Nebuchadnezzar knew that it wasn't Daniel himself that revealed these things, but Daniel's God revealed it through Daniel. Daniel wanted the glory to go to God, and it did.

c. **The king promoted Daniel:** Daniel not only had his life spared, but he was promoted to high office - and he made sure his friends were also promoted. It was fitting that Daniel's friends got to share in his advancement, because they accomplished much of the victory through their prayers.

(Dan 2:2) The king issued an order⁵ to summon the magicians, astrologers, sorcerers, and wise men⁶ in order to explain his dreams to him.⁷ So they came and awaited the king's instructions.⁸

(Dan 2:3) The king told them, "I have had a dream,⁹ and I¹⁰ am anxious to understand the dream."

(Dan 2:4) The wise men replied to the king: [What follows is in Aramaic¹¹] "O king, live forever! Tell your servants the dream, and we will disclose its¹² interpretation."

(Dan 2:5) The king replied¹³ to the wise men, "My decision is firm.¹⁴ If you do not inform me of both the dream and its interpretation, you will be dismembered¹⁵ and your homes reduced to rubble!

(Dan 2:6) But if you can disclose the dream and its interpretation, you will receive from me gifts, a reward, and considerable honor. So disclose to me the dream and its interpretation!"

(Dan 2:7) They again replied, "Let the king inform us¹⁶ of the dream; then we will disclose its¹⁷ interpretation."

(Dan 2:8) The king replied, "I know for sure that you are attempting to gain time, because you see that my decision is firm.

(Dan 2:9) If you don't inform me of the dream, there is only one thing that is going to happen to you.¹⁸ For you have agreed among yourselves to report to me something false and deceitful¹⁹ until such time as things might change. So

tell me the dream, and I will have confidence²⁰ that you can disclose its interpretation."

(Dan 2:10) The wise men replied to the king, "There is no man on earth who is able to disclose the king's secret,²¹ for no king, regardless of his position and power, has ever requested such a thing from any magician, astrologer, or wise man.

(Dan 2:11) What the king is asking is too difficult, and no one exists who can disclose it to the king, except for the gods — but they don't live among mortals!"²²

(Dan 2:12) Because of this the king got furiously angry²³ and gave orders to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.

(Dan 2:13) So a decree went out, and the wise men were about²⁴ to be executed. They also sought²⁵ Daniel and his friends so that they could be executed.

(Dan 2:14) Then Daniel spoke with prudent counsel²⁶ to Arioch, who was in charge of the king's executioners and who had gone out to execute the wise men of Babylon.

(Dan 2:15) He inquired of Arioch the king's deputy, "Why is the decree from the king so urgent?"²⁷ Then Arioch informed Daniel about the matter.

(Dan 2:16) So Daniel went in and²⁸ requested the king to grant him time, that he might disclose the interpretation to the king.

(Dan 2:17) Then Daniel went to his home and informed his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the matter.

(Dan 2:18) He asked them to pray for mercy from the God of heaven concerning this mystery so that he²⁹ and his friends would not be destroyed along with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

(Dan 2:19) Then in a night vision the mystery was revealed to Daniel. So Daniel praised³⁰ the God of heaven,

(Dan 2:20) saying,³¹

"Let the name of God³² be praised³³ forever and ever,

for wisdom and power belong to him.
(Dan 2:21) He changes times and seasons,

deposing some kings

and establishing others.³⁴

He gives wisdom to the wise;

he imparts knowledge to those with understanding;³⁵
(Dan 2:22) he reveals deep and hidden things.

He knows what is in the darkness,

and light resides with him.

(Dan 2:23) O God of my fathers, I acknowledge and glorify
you,

for you have bestowed wisdom and power on me.

Now you have enabled me to understand what I³⁶
requested from you.

For you have enabled me to understand the king's
dilemma."³⁷

(Dan 2:24) Then Daniel went in to see³⁸ Arioch (whom the
king had appointed to destroy the wise men of Babylon). He
came³⁹ and said to him, "Don't destroy the wise men of

Babylon! Escort me⁴⁰ to the king, and I will disclose the interpretation to him!"⁴¹

(Dan 2:25) So Arioch quickly ushered Daniel into the king's presence, saying to him, "I⁴² have found a man from the captives of Judah who can make known the interpretation to the king."

(Dan 2:26) The king then asked Daniel (whose name was also Belteshazzar), "Are you able to make known to me the dream that I saw, as well as its interpretation?"

(Dan 2:27) Daniel replied to the king, "The mystery that the king is asking about is such that no wise men, astrologers, magicians, or diviners can possibly disclose it to the king.

(Dan 2:28) However, there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries,⁴³ and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in the times to come.⁴⁴ The dream and the visions you had while lying on your bed⁴⁵ are as follows.

(Dan 2:29) "As for you, O king, while you were in your bed your thoughts turned to future things.⁴⁶ The revealer of mysteries has made known to you what will take place.

(Dan 2:30) As for me, this mystery was revealed to me not because I possess more wisdom⁴⁷ than any other living person, but so that the king may understand⁴⁸ the interpretation and comprehend the thoughts of your mind.⁴⁹

(Dan 2:31) "You, O king, were watching as a great statue — one⁵⁰ of impressive size and extraordinary brightness — was standing before you. Its appearance caused alarm.

(Dan 2:32) As for that statue, its head was of fine gold, its chest and arms were of silver, its belly and thighs were of bronze.

(Dan 2:33) Its legs were of iron; its feet were partly of iron and partly of clay.⁵¹

(Dan 2:34) You were watching as⁵² a stone was cut out,⁵³ but not by human hands. It struck the statue on its iron and clay feet, breaking them in pieces.

(Dan 2:35) Then the iron, clay, bronze, silver, and gold were broken in pieces without distinction⁵⁴ and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors that the wind carries away. Not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the statue became a large mountain that filled the entire earth.

(Dan 2:36) This was the dream. Now we⁵⁵ will set forth before the king its interpretation.

(Dan 2:37) ***Daniel Interprets Nebuchadnezzar's Dream***

"You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has granted you sovereignty, power, strength, and honor.

(Dan 2:38) Wherever human beings,⁵⁶ wild animals,⁵⁷ and birds of the sky live — he has given them into your power.⁵⁸ He has given you authority over them all. You are the head of gold.

(Dan 2:39) Now after you another kingdom⁵⁹ will arise, one inferior to yours. Then a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule in all the earth.

(Dan 2:40) Then there will be a fourth kingdom, one strong like iron. Just like iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything, and as iron breaks in pieces⁶⁰ all of these metals,⁶¹ so it will break in pieces and crush the others.⁶²

(Dan 2:41) In that you were seeing feet and toes⁶³ partly of wet clay⁶⁴ and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom. Some of the strength of iron will be in it, for you saw iron mixed with wet clay.⁶⁵

(Dan 2:42) In that the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, the latter stages of this kingdom will be partly strong and partly fragile.

(Dan 2:43) And⁶⁶ in that you saw iron mixed with wet clay, so people will be mixed⁶⁷ with one another⁶⁸ without adhering to one another, just as⁶⁹ iron does not mix with clay.

(Dan 2:44) In the days of those kings the God of heaven will raise up an everlasting kingdom that will not be destroyed

and a kingdom that will not be left to another people. It will break in pieces and bring about the demise of all these kingdoms. But it will stand forever.

(Dan 2:45) You saw that a stone was cut from a mountain, but not by human hands; it smashed the iron, bronze, clay, silver, and gold into pieces. The great God has made known to the king what will occur in the future.⁷⁰ The dream is certain, and its interpretation is reliable."

(Dan 2:46) Then King Nebuchadnezzar bowed down with his face to the ground⁷¹ and paid homage to Daniel. He gave orders to offer sacrifice and incense to him.

(Dan 2:47) The king replied to Daniel, "Certainly your God is a God of gods and Lord of kings and revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery!"

(Dan 2:48) Then the king elevated Daniel to high position and bestowed on him many marvelous gifts. He granted him authority over the entire province of Babylon and made him the main prefect over all the wise men of Babylon.

(Dan 2:49) And at Daniel's request, the king⁷² appointed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego over the administration of the province of Babylon. Daniel himself served in the king's court.⁷³

(Dan 3:1) ***Daniel's Friends Are Tested***

1 King Nebuchadnezzar had a golden² statue made.³ It was ninety feet⁴ tall and nine feet⁵ wide. He erected it on the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.

(Guzik)

Dan 3:1-30

DANIEL 3 - SAVED IN THE FIERY FURNACE

A. Nebuchadnezzar erects an image and demands everyone worship it.

1. (Dan_3:1) The image is made and set up.

Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height *was* sixty cubits *and* its width six cubits. He set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon.

a. Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold:

There is considerable debate regarding when this happened. Some think it was a short time after the events of Daniel 2, but others think it happened many years later.

i. There is a discernible link between Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2 and the image he made in Daniel 3. It seems that Nebuchadnezzar deliberately made an *entire* statue of gold, saying that the day of his reign and authority would never end - in contradiction to God's declared plan.

b. An image of gold: The image was more like a stylized obelisk than a normal statue, being 90 feet high and 9 feet wide.

Being so large, it is safe to say that it was not made of solid gold but probably wood overlaid with gold. This was a common method of construction in the ancient world.

i. "On the plains of Dura there stands today, a rectilinear mound, about twenty feet high, an exact square of about forty-six feet at the base, resembling the pedestal of a colossal statue." (Heslop)

2. (Dan_3:2-3) All Babylonia's dignitaries gathered at the dedication of the image.

And King Nebuchadnezzar sent *word* to gather together the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. So the satraps, the administrators, the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the judges, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered together for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

a. Gather together the satraps: **Satrap** is a Persian loan word that means "protector of the realm." It refers to a specific category of public officials.

b. **All the officials of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image:** The demand that all come to the dedication ceremony means that Nebuchadnezzar meant to use the worship of this image as a test of allegiance.

3. (Dan_3:4-6) The command to worship the image.

Then a herald cried aloud: "To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, *that* at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, *and* psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace."

a. **Horn, flute, harp, lyre, and psaltery:** Some of the musical instruments are difficult to define precisely but the idea is clear. This was an impressive orchestra.

i. The use of the Aramaic words for **lyre**, **psaltery** and **symphony** has led some critics to say that the book of Daniel was written hundreds of years after the time of Daniel. They say this because these particular words are Aramaic words borrowed from Greek words and supposedly Daniel did not have had these words at his disposal in the sixth century B.C. and they supposedly did not come into the Hebrew vocabulary until the third century B.C.

ii. Nevertheless, ancient records tell us there were Greeks in the region of Assyria, Babylon and Persia as far back as the *eighth* century B.C. Archaeology also proves beyond a doubt that Greek mercenaries fought and made military settlements in and around Judea before the time of Daniel.

b. **Whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace:** The command is empowered by a naked threat. Nebuchadnezzar regarded refusing to worship the image as *treason*, not only as a religious offense.

i. In this, Nebuchadnezzar is just like most politicians, who often seem willing to use religion to strengthen their grip on

political power. Politicians are happy to blend together *spiritual* allegiance and *national* allegiance. An example of this was displayed in 1936 when Herr Baldur von Schirach, head of the youth program in Nazi Germany, said: "If we act as true Germans we act according to the laws of God. Whoever serves Adolf Hitler, the fuehrer, serves Germany, and whoever serves Germany serves God."

ii. Another example comes from 1960 when the President of Ghana had a slightly larger than life-size statue of himself erected in front of the national house of Parliament. An inscription on the side of the statue read, "Seek ye first the political kingdom and all other things shall be added unto you." The statue was destroyed after a bloodless coup in 1966.

c. **A burning fiery furnace:** Nebuchadnezzar was not a man who allowed lawbreakers to go unpunished. In a cuneiform writing, Nebuchadnezzar is described as so devoted to justice that "he did not rest night or day." The document also tells of a criminal guilty of a second offense who was decapitated and afterwards a stone image of his head was displayed as a warning.

4. (Dan_3:7) The crowd obeys Nebuchadnezzar's command. So at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the horn, flute, harp, *and* lyre, in symphony with all kinds of music, all the people, nations, and languages fell down *and* worshiped the gold image which King Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

a. **When all the people heard the sound:** Nebuchadnezzar's grand idolatry was accompanied by music - elaborate and well-produced music. This reminds us of the great inherent power in music, both for good and for evil.

b. **Fell down and worshiped the gold image:** According to Baldwin, this literally reads *as soon as they were hearing*

they were falling down. There was total and immediate obedience to Nebuchadnezzar's command!

B. Three Hebrew men refuse the demand.

1. (Dan_3:8-12) Certain Chaldeans accuse the three Hebrew men.

Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews. They spoke and said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O

king, live forever! You, O king, have made a decree that everyone who hears the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, *and* psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the gold image; and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. There are certain Jews whom you have set over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego; these men, O king, have not paid due regard to you. They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image which you have set up."

a. **Certain Chaldeans came forward and accused the Jews:** These Chaldeans had an obvious political motivation against these Jews who were promoted to high office along with Daniel in the events recorded in the previous chapter.

b. **They do not serve your gods or worship the gold image:** Apparently their failure to worship the image was not discovered until these certain Chaldeans made it known. With so many thousands of government officials in attendance, it would be easy to overlook these three. Additionally, we see from this that the three Jewish men did not lodge a formal protest; they simply refrained from sharing in the sin of idolatry themselves.

i. Though their actions were not *public*, neither were they *hidden*. These three Hebrew men must have known they would be discovered, yet they obeyed God rather than man. "You will not be able to go through life without being discovered: a lighted candle cannot be hid. There is a feeling among some good people that it will be wise to be

very reticent, and hide their light under a bushel. They intend to lie low all the war time, and come out when the palms are being distributed. They hope to travel to heaven by the back lanes, and skulk into glory in disguise. Ah me, what a degenerate set!" (Spurgeon)

2. (Dan_3:13-15) Nebuchadnezzar interviews the disobedient Hebrew men.

Then Nebuchadnezzar, in rage and fury, gave the command to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. So they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying to them, "*Is it true*, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, *that* you do not serve my gods or worship the gold image which I have set up? Now if you are ready at the time you hear the sound of the horn, flute, harp, lyre, *and* psaltery, in symphony with all kinds of music, and you fall down and worship the image which I have made, *good!* But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. And who *is* the god who will deliver you from my hands?"

a. **Is it true:** To his credit, Nebuchadnezzar did not accept the accusation on hearsay. He made sure of it with a personal interview. This was an even greater test for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. It is one thing to make a stand for God; it is a greater thing to *stick to your stand* when pointedly asked, "**Is it true?** " Peter could follow Jesus after His arrest, but he wilted and denied Jesus when asked, "**Is it true?** "

i. "If, standing before the heart-searching God at this time, you cannot say, 'It is true,' how should you act? If you cannot say that you take Christ's cross, and are willing to follow him at all hazards, then hearken to me and learn the truth. Do not make a profession at all. Do not talk about baptism or the Lord's Supper, nor of joining a church, nor of being a Christian; for if you do, you will lie against your own soul. If it be not true that you renounce the world's idols, do not profess that it is so. It is unnecessary that a man should

profess to be what he is not; it is a sin of supererogation, a superfluity of naughtiness. If you cannot be true to Christ, if your coward heart is recreant to your Lord, do not profess to be his disciple, I beseech you. He that is married to the world, or flinthearted, had better return to his house, for he is of no service in this war.” (Spurgeon)

b. **But if you do not worship, you shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace:** Nebuchadnezzar would not tolerate losing face on such an important occasion. His pride made him declare, “You shall have no other gods than me.”

i. We can imagine the enormous pressure on Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego to compromise. Everything in front of them - the king, the furnace, the music, their compatriots, their competitors - all of it conspired to convince them to compromise. Yet God was more real to them than any of those things. “Do not judge the situation by the

king’s threat and by the heat of the burning fiery furnace, but by the everlasting God and the eternal life which awaits you. Let not flute, harp, and sackbut fascinate you, but hearken to the music of the glorified. Men frown at you, but you can see God smiling on you, and so you are not moved.” (Spurgeon)

c. **Who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?** Nebuchadnezzar thinks nothing of insulting *all* gods with this statement. He is more of a *secularist* or a *humanist* than a *theist*. The god he *really* believes in is himself, not the gods of Babylon.

3. (Dan_3:16-18) The three Hebrew men insist they will never worship the image.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that *is the case*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace,

and He will deliver *us* from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.”

a. **We have no need to answer you:** They had **no need** to defend themselves. Their guilt in the matter was clear - they clearly would not bow down to this image.

b. **Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us:** In this, the Jewish men show they have a good understanding and appreciation of God’s great power. In fact, they know that God is able to save them from both the **burning fiery furnace** and from the **hand** of Nebuchadnezzar himself.

c. **But if not:** In this, the Jewish men show they have a good understanding and appreciation of *submission* to God. They know God’s power, but they also know that they must do what is right even if God does not do what they expect or hope Him to do.

i. We often whine about our “rights” and what is “fair.” Often it is better to make a stand and take your lumps, leaving your fate in God’s hands.

ii. They did not doubt God’s ability but neither did they presume to know God’s will. In this they agreed with Job: *Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him* (Job_13:15). They recognized that God’s plan might be different than their desires. I have my own desires and dreams and I pray that God fulfills them. But if He doesn’t, I can’t turn my back on Him.

iii. These were men who did not love too much. There are popular self-help books that hope to help people who seem to love too much, yet many Christians are hindered because they love too much. Remember that early Christians were not thrown to the lions because they worshipped Jesus, but because they would *not* worship the emperor.

iv. In our day, many do love Jesus and think highly of Him - yet they are far from God because they also love and

worship the world, sin, and self. *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.* (1Jn_2:15)

d. **Let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up:** It took great faith to say this. God brought them to this place of great faith by preparing them with tests in less dramatic areas.

i. These men stood firm when challenged to eat impure foods and they saw God bless their obedience. That gave them the courage to obey now, when the stakes were much higher.

ii. Are you waiting for something “big” before you really start to obey God? Is your life filled with many small compromises, yet you tell yourself that you will stand firm when it “really” matters? Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego show us that “small” things really matter,

e. The statement of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego is also remarkable for what it does *not* have - any hint of an excuse. In a time of testing like this it is easy to think of a thousand excuses that seem to justify compromise.

i. They might have said, *“There is nothing to gain by resisting; wouldn’t we do more good by living?”* It is easy to say, “we must live,” but in reality, we all must die - so why not die making a stand for God?

ii. They might have said, *“We are in a different place; in Rome, do as the Romans do.”* Yet they knew that God has unlimited jurisdiction. We must do more than “perform” acts of religious obedience when we have an audience.

iii. They might have said, *“We will lose our jobs and our standard of living.”* Often when God blesses us we make the blessing an idol and compromise God to keep what we have.

iv. They might have said, *“After all, we are not being called to renounce our God.”* They did not have a super-elastic conscience that said “we are not bowing down to the idol, but in respect for the king, or to the music.”

Excuses like this are common but prove the principle that anything will serve as an excuse, when the heart is bent on compromise.

v. They might have said, "*Everybody else is doing it.*" Instead they cultivated brave personalities, willing to stand alone with God

vi. They might have said, "*It is only for once, and not for very long. Ten minutes, just for the king. It is stupid to throw our lives away for ten minutes.*" These men knew that ten minutes could change an entire life. Ten minutes can chart the course for your eternity.

vii. They might have said, "*This is more than can be expected of us; God will understand just this once.*" It is true that God understands our struggle with sin - that is why He loves the sinner and made provision at the cross for freedom from the penalty, power, and presence of sin. Knowing that "God understands" should be a spur to obedience, not a license to sin.

viii. "I am glad that the three holy children were not 'careful to answer,' [the KJV has, "we are not careful to answer thee" here] or they might have fallen upon some crooked policy or lame excuse for compromise. What have we to do with consequences? It is ours to do the right, and leave results with the Lord." (Spurgeon)

C. The Hebrew men in the fiery furnace.

1. (Dan_3:19-23) The three men are cast violently into the furnace.

Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression on his face changed toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. He spoke and commanded that they heat the furnace seven times more than it was usually heated. And he commanded certain mighty men of valor who *were* in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, *and* cast *them* into the burning fiery furnace.

Then these men were bound in their coats, their trousers, their turbans, and their *other* garments, and were cast into

the midst of the burning fiery furnace. Therefore, because the king's command was urgent, and the furnace exceedingly hot, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

a. **Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury:** No matter how brave Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were, this still must have been extremely intimidating. We get the feeling that prior to their statement he spoke kindly, almost in a fatherly manner to these “wayward boys.” After hearing their bold challenge **the expression on his face changed.**

i. Despite the intense intimidation, the men stayed courageous in their confession of faith. Spurgeon eloquently described the horror of those who lose their courage at such times: “Remember also that by yielding to the fear of man you are demeaning yourself. There shall come a day when the man that was ashamed of Christ will himself be ashamed: he will wonder where he can hide his guilty head. Look at him! There he is! The traitor who denied his Lord! The Christ was spat upon and nailed to the cross, and this man was afraid to own him. To win the smile of a silly maid, to escape the jest of a coarse fellow, to win a few pieces of silver, to stand respectable among his fellow-men, he turned his back upon his Redeemer and sold his Lord; and now what can be said for him? Who can excuse him? The angels shun him as a man who was ashamed of the Lord of glory. He is clothed with shame and everlasting contempt. Even the lost in hell get away from him, for many of them were more honest than he. Is there such a man as this before me? I summon him in the name of the living God to answer for his cowardice! Let him come forth and own his crime, and humbly seek forgiveness at the hands of the gracious Savior.” (Spurgeon)

b. **Bound in their coats . . . the furnace exceedingly hot:** Everything was done to make sure that the three Hebrew men were quickly and completely burned.

2. (Dan_3:24-25) Nebuchadnezzar sees four alive and well in the furnace.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste *and* spoke, saying to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." "Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God."

a. **Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished:** It is astonishing that anyone survived for a moment *inside* the furnace when others perished *at the door*.

i. The Septuagint says in Dan_3:24 that Nebuchadnezzar's attention was caught when he heard them singing praises in the furnace. We can imagine that the king had them cast into the furnace and didn't intend to look twice, believing they would be immediately consumed. As he walks away with a satisfied look on his face, he is immediately stopped by the sound of *singing* coming from the furnace. At a safe distance from the raging heat he peers inside - and sees **four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire**.

ii. If this singing in the furnace is true, it reminds us of Paul and Silas singing in the Philippian jail (Act_16:25).

b. **I see four men loose . . . and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God:** Nebuchadnezzar tells us who the fourth was - **the Son of God**. Jesus was literally with them in the worst of their trial.

i. We don't know if Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego *knew* that the **Son of God** was with them in their fiery trial. Sometimes we are aware of Jesus' presence in our trials and sometimes we are not - but He is there nonetheless.

ii. Spurgeon observed that God's people are often in the furnace, and though there are different kinds of furnaces they serve similar purposes in our life

- There is the furnace that men prepare
- There is the furnace that Satan prepares
- There is the furnace that God prepares

iii. God can deliver us *from* a trial, or He can miraculously sustain and strengthen us *in* a trial. Trapp quotes an English martyr who said this as he was burnt at the stake: "O ye Papists, behold ye look for miracles; here now you may see a miracle; for in this fire I feel no more pain than as if I were in a bed of down; but it is to me as a bed of roses."

c. **I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire:** Nebuchadnezzar also observed that the four men were *free* in the fire. The fire only burnt the ropes that bound them.

3. (Dan_3:26-27) The Hebrew men leave the furnace unharmed.

Then Nebuchadnezzar went near the mouth of the burning fiery furnace *and* spoke, saying, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come *here*." Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego came from the midst of the fire. And the satraps, administrators, governors, and the king's counselors gathered together, and they saw these men on whose bodies the fire had no power; the hair of their head was not singed nor were their garments affected, and the smell of fire was not on them.

a. **Servants of the Most High God:** Before they are out of the furnace, Nebuchadnezzar recognizes that these men serve the *true* God, the God **Most High**.

b. **These men on whose bodies the fire had no power:** The trial had **no power** over these men because they were thoroughly submitted to the power and will of God. Even before the time of Jesus they knew the truth of Jesus promise: *In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.* (Joh_16:33) c. **The**

smell of fire was not on them: This demonstrates how complete their deliverance was.

i. This whole account illustrates - perhaps serving as a type - of the future of Israel during the Great Tribulation.

- Nebuchadnezzar is like the Antichrist, who forces the whole world into one religion of idolatry

- Nebuchadnezzar's image is like the image described in Revelation 13, that the whole world will be commanded to worship

- The fiery furnace is like the Great Tribulation, which will be great affliction for the Jews

- The three Hebrew men are like Israel, who will be preserved through the tribulation

- The executioners who perished are like those in league with the Antichrist, who Jesus will slay at His return

- The mysteriously absent Daniel is like the church, not even present for this time of great tribulation

D. Aftermath.

1. (Dan_3:28) Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges the greatness of the God of the three Hebrews.

Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God!

a. **Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego:** Nebuchadnezzar gives glory to God, but he recognizes that this great God is not *his* God. He is still **the God of** these three brave men.

b. **Who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him:** In Dan_3:15 Nebuchadnezzar asked, "who *is* the god who will deliver you from my hands?" Now he knows:

- He is the God of the Hebrews (**the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego**)

- He is the God who sends a Savior (**who sent His Angel**)
- He is the God of great power (**delivered His servants**)
- He is the God worthy of trust (**who trusted in Him**)
- He is the God worthy of full surrender (**frustrated the king's word, and yielded their bodies**) · He is the God who demands exclusive allegiance (**that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God**)

i. Nebuchadnezzar knows a lot about God - but he does not yet know Him personally.

c. **Yielded their bodies:** Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego surrendered themselves *completely* to God - body, soul, and spirit. It was the kind of submission Paul wrote of in Rom_12:1 : *present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.*

i. This whole account is a powerful illustration of the principle of Rom_12:1. We see Satan trying to make the believer bow down to his idealized image of what men and women should be. Christians must resist this with everything they have and pursue God's ideal. In this, we will fulfill Rom_12:2 : *And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

2. (Dan_3:29) Nebuchadnezzar makes a proclamation that nothing evil should be said against the God of the Hebrews.

"Therefore I make a decree that any people, nation, or language which speaks anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made an ash heap; because there is no other God who can deliver like this." Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego in the province of Babylon.

a. **Therefore I make a decree:** The three Hebrew men did not ask for Nebuchadnezzar to make this decree, and they probably did not want him to. Coerced worship isn't good, either towards an idol or towards the true God.

b. There is no other God who can deliver like this:

Seeing God at work in the life of His people was an extremely effective testimony to Nebuchadnezzar.

i. Paul expressed the same idea in 2Co_3:2-3 : *You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.*

(Dan 3:2) Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent out a summons to assemble the satraps, prefects, governors, counselors, treasurers, judges, magistrates,⁶ and all the other authorities of the province to attend the dedication of the statue that he⁷ had erected.

(Dan 3:3) So the satraps, prefects, governors, counselors, treasurers, judges, magistrates, and all the other provincial authorities assembled for the dedication of the statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had erected. They were standing in front of the statue that Nebuchadnezzar had erected.⁸

(Dan 3:4) Then the herald⁹ made a loud¹⁰ proclamation: "To you, O peoples, nations, and language groups, the following command is given:¹¹

(Dan 3:5) When you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither,¹² trigon, harp, pipes, and all kinds of music, you must¹³ bow down and pay homage to the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar has erected.

(Dan 3:6) Whoever does not bow down and pay homage will immediately¹⁴ be thrown into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire!"

(Dan 3:7) Therefore when they all¹⁵ heard the sound of the horn, flute, zither, trigon, harp, pipes,¹⁶ and all kinds of music, all the peoples, nations, and language groups began bowing down and paying homage to the golden statue that King Nebuchadnezzar had erected.

(Dan 3:8) Now¹⁷ at that time certain¹⁸ Chaldeans came forward and brought malicious accusations against¹⁹ the Jews.

(Dan 3:9) They said²⁰ to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live forever!"²¹

(Dan 3:10) You have issued an edict, O king, that everyone must bow down and pay homage to the golden statue when they hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, trigon, harp, pipes, and all kinds of music.

(Dan 3:11) And whoever does not bow down and pay homage must be thrown into the midst of a furnace of blazing fire.

(Dan 3:12) But there are Jewish men whom you appointed over the administration of the province of Babylon — Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego — and these men²² have not shown proper respect to you, O king. They don't serve your gods and they don't pay homage to the golden statue that you have erected."

(Dan 3:13) Then Nebuchadnezzar in a fit of rage²³ demanded that they bring²⁴ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego before him. So they brought them²⁵ before the king.

(Dan 3:14) Nebuchadnezzar said to them, "Is it true, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you don't serve my gods and that you don't pay homage to the golden statue that I erected?

(Dan 3:15) Now if you are ready, when you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither, trigon, harp, pipes, and all kinds of music, you must bow down and pay homage to the statue that I had made. If you don't pay homage to it, you will immediately be thrown into the midst of the furnace of blazing fire. Now, who is that god who can rescue you from my power?"²⁶

(Dan 3:16) Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied to King Nebuchadnezzar,²⁷ "We do not need to give you a reply²⁸ concerning this.

(Dan 3:17) If²⁹ our God whom we are serving exists,³⁰ he is able to rescue us from the furnace of blazing fire, and he will rescue us, O

king, from your power as well.

(Dan 3:18) But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we don't serve your gods, and we will not pay homage to the golden statue that you have erected."

(Dan 3:19) Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with rage, and his disposition changed³¹ toward Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He gave orders³² to heat the furnace seven times hotter than it was normally heated.

(Dan 3:20) He ordered strong³³ soldiers in his army to tie up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and to throw them into the furnace of blazing fire.

(Dan 3:21) So those men were tied up while still wearing their cloaks, trousers, turbans, and other clothes,³⁴ and were thrown into the furnace³⁵ of blazing fire.

(Dan 3:22) But since the king's command was so urgent, and the furnace was so excessively hot, the men who escorted³⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were killed³⁷ by the leaping flames.³⁸

(Dan 3:23) But those three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell into the furnace³⁹ of blazing fire while still securely bound.⁴⁰

(Dan 3:24) ***God Delivers His Servants***

Then King Nebuchadnezzar was startled and quickly got up. He said to his ministers, "Wasn't it three men that we tied up and threw⁴¹ into⁴² the fire?" They replied to the king, "For sure, O king."

(Dan 3:25) He answered, "But I see four men, untied and walking around in the midst of the fire! No harm has come to them! And the appearance of the fourth is like that of a god!"⁴³

(Dan 3:26) Then Nebuchadnezzar approached the door of the furnace of blazing fire. He called out,⁴⁴ "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the most high God, come out! Come here!"

Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego emerged from the fire.⁴⁵

(Dan 3:27) Once the satraps, prefects, governors, and ministers of the king had gathered around, they saw that those men were physically⁴⁶ unharmed by the fire.⁴⁷ The hair of their heads was not singed, nor were their trousers damaged. Not even the smell of fire was to be found on them!

(Dan 3:28) Nebuchadnezzar exclaimed,⁴⁸ "Praised be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent forth his angel⁴⁹ and has rescued his servants who trusted in him, ignoring⁵⁰ the edict of the king and giving up their bodies rather than⁵¹ serve or pay homage to any god other than their God!

(Dan 3:29) I hereby decree⁵² that any people, nation, or language group that blasphemes⁵³ the god of Shadrach, Meshach, or Abednego will be dismembered and his home reduced to rubble! For there exists no other god who can deliver in this way."

(Dan 3:30) Then Nebuchadnezzar⁵⁴ promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

(Dan 4:1) (3:31)¹ "King Nebuchadnezzar, to all peoples, nations, and language groups that live in all the land: Peace and prosperity!²

(Guzik)

Dan 4:1-37

DANIEL 4 - THE FALL AND RISE OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR

A. Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the tree.

1. (Dan_4:1-3) The opening of Nebuchadnezzar's decree.

Nebuchadnezzar the king, to all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you. I thought it good to declare the signs and wonders that the Most High God has worked for me. How great *are* His signs, and how mighty His wonders! His kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom, and His dominion *is* from generation to generation.

a. **Nebuchadnezzar the king:** This unique chapter is the testimony of a Gentile king about how God changed his heart.

In this, Nebuchadnezzar is a good example of a *witness* (one who relates what he has seen and experienced).

b. **I thought it good to declare:** It *is good to declare* what God has done for us. Satan has a huge interest in keeping us unnaturally silent about **the signs and wonders that the Most High God has worked for us**.

c. **His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom:** Nebuchadnezzar was a great king, but in this chapter he recognizes that God's kingdom is far greater and His dominion is completely unique because it is an **everlasting kingdom**.

2. (Dan_4:4-9) Only Daniel can explain the dream to Nebuchadnezzar.

I, Nebuchadnezzar, was at rest in my house, and flourishing in my palace. I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts on my bed and the visions of my head troubled me. Therefore I issued a decree to bring in all the wise *men* of Babylon before me, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. Then the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers came in, and I told them the dream; but they did not make known to me its interpretation. But at last Daniel came before me (his name *is* Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god; in him *is* the Spirit of the Holy God), and I told the dream before him, *saying*: "Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, because I know that the Spirit of the Holy God *is* in you, and no secret troubles you, explain to me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and its interpretation."

a. **Was at rest in my house, and flourishing in my palace:** Nebuchadnezzar's rest was the false peace of the ungodly. God soon shook him from his false security.

b. **I told them the dream; but they did not make known to me its interpretation:** This is not the same

dream as in Daniel 2. Nebuchadnezzar readily told his counselors this dream but they **did not** tell him what it meant. The dream was fairly easy to interpret; the wise men probably lacked *courage* more than *insight*. Nebuchadnezzar says they **did not make it known**, not that they *could not* make it known.

c. **At last Daniel came before me:** “And why ‘at last’? Why was he not sooner sent for? If the soothsayers and sorcerers could have served the turn, Daniel had never been sought to. This is the guise of graceless men; they run not to God till all other refuges fail them.”

d. **His name is Belteshazzar, according to the name of my god:** Before Daniel interpreted the dream described in this chapter for Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon considered the Babylonian deity *Bel* his god.

i. This means that what he saw previously with Daniel and the three Hebrew young men was enough to impress him, but not enough to convert him. Being impressed with God isn't the same as being converted.

3. (Dan_4:10-17) The content of the dream: the rise and fall of a great tree.

These *were* the visions of my head *while* on my bed: I was looking, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and its height was great. The tree grew and became strong; its height reached to the heavens, and it could be seen to the ends of all the earth. Its leaves *were* lovely, its fruit abundant, and in it *was* food for all. The beasts of the field found shade under it, the birds of the heavens dwelt in its branches, and all flesh was fed from it. I saw in the visions of my head *while* on my bed, and there was a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven. He cried aloud and said thus: “Chop down the tree and cut off its branches, strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the beasts get out from under it, and the birds from its branches. Nevertheless leave the stump and roots in the earth, *bound* with a band of iron and bronze, in the tender grass of the field. Let it be wet

with the dew of heaven, and *let* him graze with the beasts on the grass of the earth. Let his heart be changed from *that of* a man, let him be given the heart of a beast, and let seven times pass over him. This decision *is* by the decree of the watchers, and the sentence by the word of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men.”

a. **A tree in the midst of the earth:** The **tree** in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was noted for its size, strength, prominence, beauty, fruit, and shelter.

b. **He cried aloud and said thus:** The **watcher** (presumably an angel) explains the fate of the tree. He notes that the tree is to be chopped down, and it will lose its size, strength, prominence, beauty, fruit, and shelter. He also says that the **tree** represents **a man** who will be **changed** and **given the heart of a beast**.

i. **Bound with a band of iron and bronze:** These are either for the tree stump’s confinement or protection. It is no longer free and great.

c. **In order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men:** Nebuchadnezzar heard these words in his dream. In light of this, the dream isn’t hard to interpret - it clearly deals with the humbling of a great king. No wonder none of Nebuchadnezzar’s counselors wanted to interpret the dream for him!

i. Like most kings - ancient and modern - Nebuchadnezzar wanted to believe that *he* ruled instead of God or anyone else. “Both the Assyrian and the Babylonian kings thought of themselves as rulers over all the earth, so describing themselves in their inscriptions.” (Wood)

4. (Dan_4:18) Nebuchadnezzar asks Daniel to interpret the dream.

This dream I, King Nebuchadnezzar, have seen. Now you, Belteshazzar, declare its interpretation, since all the wise *men* of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the

interpretation; but you *are* able, for the Spirit of the Holy God *is* in you.

a. **Declare its interpretation:** Nebuchadnezzar knew he could get an honest answer from Daniel, even when the truth was hard to bear.

b. **You are able, for the Spirit of the Holy God is in you:** Though Nebuchadnezzar recognized Daniel as a man filled with **the Spirit of the Holy God**, he had not yet yielded himself to the Holy God.

B. Daniel's explanation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

1. (Dan_4:19-26) Daniel explains the rise and coming fall of Nebuchadnezzar.

Then Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, was astonished for a time, and his thoughts troubled him. *So* the king spoke, and said, "Belteshazzar, do not let the dream or its interpretation trouble you." Belteshazzar answered and said, "My lord, *may* the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies! The tree that you saw, which grew and became strong, whose height reached to the heavens and which *could be seen* by all the earth, whose leaves *were* lovely and its fruit abundant, in which *was* food for all, under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and in whose branches the birds of the heaven had their home; it *is* you, O king, who have grown and become strong; for your greatness has grown and reaches to the heavens, and your dominion to the end of the earth. And inasmuch as the king saw a watcher, a holy one, coming down from heaven and saying, 'Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave its stump and roots in the earth, *bound* with a band of iron and bronze in the tender grass of the field; let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him graze with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him'; this is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the Most High, which has come upon my lord the king: They shall drive you from men, your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make you eat grass like oxen.

They shall wet you with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over you, till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses. And inasmuch as they gave the command to leave the stump *and* roots of the tree, your kingdom shall be assured to you, after you come to know that Heaven rules.”

a. **His thoughts troubled him:** Daniel genuinely cared for Nebuchadnezzar and was clearly affected by the meaning of the dream. He didn't *want* it to be true of his friend Nebuchadnezzar.

b. **It is you, O king:** Daniel applies the point without ambiguity. Instead of reaching for a general point (“we all could use a little more humility”) Daniel brought the truth in love. This reminds us of what the prophet Nathan said to King David: *You are the man!* (2Sa_12:7)

i. “Great men and princes are often represented, in the language of the prophets, under the similitude of *trees*, see Eze_17:5-6; Eze_31:3 and following; Jer_22:15; Psa_1:3; Psa_37:35.” (Clarke)

c. **Drive you from men . . . make you eat grass like oxen . . . wet you with the dew of heaven:** When Daniel explained this to Nebuchadnezzar, the king probably couldn't have guessed just how literally it would be fulfilled.

d. **After you come to know that Heaven rules:** This was God's intended purpose for Nebuchadnezzar. The king could have avoided this humiliating fate if he genuinely humbled himself.

2. (Dan_4:27) Daniel, a good preacher, presses home the application: repent; perhaps it is not too late.

Therefore, O king, let my advice be acceptable to you; break off your sins by *being* righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to *the* poor. Perhaps there may be a lengthening of your prosperity.”

a. **Break off your sins:** The right reaction to the threat of judgment is a humble repentance. Unfortunately, Nebuchadnezzar did not do this. He should have followed

the example of the repentance of Nineveh at the preaching of Jonah (Jonah 3).

i. We might think that Nebuchadnezzar had more reason than most to be proud - after all, he was a great king. Still, he should have remembered the principle Benjamin Franklin put forth in one of his proverbs: "The greatest monarch on the proudest throne, is obliged to sit upon his own rear end."

b. **Break off your sins by being righteous, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor:** Nebuchadnezzar is not only counseled to *stop* sinning, but also to *practice* righteousness and generosity.

C. Fulfillment of the dream.

1. (Dan_4:28-33) Nebuchadnezzar is stricken with madness, and humbled.

All *this* came upon King Nebuchadnezzar. At the end of the twelve months he was walking about the royal palace of Babylon. The king spoke, saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?" While the word *was still* in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven: "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling *shall be* with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses." That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles' *feathers* and his nails like birds' *claws*.

a. **At the end of the twelve months:** God gave Nebuchadnezzar twelve months to repent, and he probably forgot about the dream during that time - but God didn't forget.

b. Is not this great Babylon: Babylon was truly one of the spectacular cities of the ancient world, including the famous “hanging gardens” built by Nebuchadnezzar.

i. Daniel knew that the new Babylon was the creation of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan_4:30), something previously thought untrue and only verified by recent archaeology. Nobody in the Maccabean period (second century B.C.) thought Nebuchadnezzar built the new Babylon.

ii. In the British Museum, there are six columns of writing recovered from Babylon with describe the huge building projects of Nebuchadnezzar and his zeal to enlarge and beautify the city.

iii. Most of the bricks found in the excavations of Babylon carry this stamp: “Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, supporter of Esagila and Ezida, exalted first-born son of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon.”

iv. Late-daters of Daniel (who say that it was written in the times of the Macabees, around 167 B.C.) can’t explain how a late writer would have known to accurately attribute the spectacular buildings of Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar. One liberal Bible commentator, R. H. Pfeiffer, says of this problem: “we shall presumably never know.”

c. They shall drive you from men . . . eat grass like oxen: The announcement came to Nebuchadnezzar in the same words he heard in his dream. This showed him that the dream was about to be fulfilled, and he would be reduced to the existence of an animal - specifically, an ox.

i. The form of insanity in which men think of themselves as animals and imitate the behavior of an animal has been observed. Some call it generally *insania zoanthropica* and more specifically in Nebuchadnezzar’s case, *boanthropy*, the delusion that one is an ox.

ii. Walvoord quotes a Dr. Raymond Harrison of Britain, who in 1946 had a patient suffering from boanthropy, just as Nebuchadnezzar suffered.

d. He was driven from men and ate grass like oxen:

There is no corresponding record of this seven-year (**seven times**) period of insanity in the secular historical records of Babylon - exactly as we would expect, considering the custom of the times. Nevertheless Abydenus, a Greek historian, wrote in 268 B.C. that Nebuchadnezzar was "possessed by some god" and that he had "immediately disappeared." (Wood)

i. Some dismiss this account of Nebuchadnezzar's madness as unhistorical, but there is no historical record of his governmental activity between 582 B.C. and 575 B.C. This silence is deafening, especially when we keep in mind how Near Eastern leaders liked to egotistically trumpet their achievements - and hide their embarrassments.

ii. "Although critics have imagined a series of incredible objections to accepting this chapter as authentic and reasonably accurate, the narrative actually reads very sensibly and the objections seem trivial and unsupported." (Walvoord)

iii. Nebuchadnezzar was given the opportunity to humble himself, and he did not. Now God humbled him, and the experience was much more severe than it would have been had Nebuchadnezzar humbled himself.

2. (Dan_4:34-37) A repentant Nebuchadnezzar is restored, and praises God.

And at the end of the time I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me; and I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever: For His dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom *is* from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and *among* the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, "What have You done?" At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles

resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me. Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works *are* truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down.

a. **At the end of the time:** Nebuchadnezzar could not break free from his madness until God appointed the **end of the time**. Then, he had the opportunity to humble himself and lift **his eyes to heaven**.

i. Nebuchadnezzar knew what Spurgeon explains: "The God whom we serve not only exists, but reigns. No other position would become him but that of unlimited sovereignty over all his creatures."

b. **I blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him:** Nebuchadnezzar could only see who the truth about *himself* when he saw the truth about *God*. The Babylonian King did see who God was, and he eloquently praised His sovereignty - then, his **reason returned**.

i. This return of reason results in *worship*. "We do not worship enough, my brethren. Even in our public gatherings we do not have enough worship. O worship the King! Bow your heads now - bow your spirits rather, and adore him that liveth for ever and ever. Your thoughts, your emotions, these are better than bullocks and he-goats to be offered on the altar: God will accept them. Worship him with lowliest reverence, for you are nothing, and he is all in all." (Spurgeon)

ii. This return of reason results in *prayer*. If we believe what Nebuchadnezzar believed about God, it will certainly show in our prayer life. We will know that God can change the heart and mind of man, the course of rivers, the flow of the oceans, the distribution of resources, and the assignment of angels.

iii. Spurgeon suggests the proper response of the believer to the greatness and sovereignty of God:

- Have a heart of humble adoration

- Show a heart of unquestioning acceptance
- Exercise the spirit of reverent love
- Let your spirit have profound delight

c. **I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me:** God *wanted* to restore Nebuchadnezzar. The goal wasn't to bring him low, but to bring him to his proper place before God and among men. Truly, Nebuchadnezzar learned that **those who walk in pride He is able to put down.**

i. This is knowledgeable testimony from a direct source. Perhaps we might learn from Nebuchadnezzar's plight and be spared a lesson in humility from God's school of hard knocks.

ii. The abiding lesson is plain: *God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble* (Jam_4:6). There have been many who rise from humble origins to great glory, and then fall. Perhaps it is better to have never been raised up than to rise and then fall. Most, if not all, fall through pride; and a *proud look* is number one on the list of God's most hated sins (Pro_6:16-19).

iii. We also see that God *will* glorify himself among the nations. When Nebuchadnezzar took some of the treasures of the Jerusalem temple and put them in the temples of his gods, he had reason to believe that his gods were stronger than the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. By the end of Daniel 4, God Nebuchadnezzar knew which God was the true God. And when Nebuchadnezzar knew it, he wasn't shy about telling people what he had learned - he was a true witness, giving testimony to God's great works.

d. Some find prophetic significance in this account. Since "Babylon" is used in the scriptures as a figure of the world system at large, we can say:

- Nebuchadnezzar's madness foreshadows the madness of Gentile nations in their rejection of God
- Nebuchadnezzar's fall typifies Jesus' judgment of the nations

· Nebuchadnezzar's restoration foreshadows the restoring of some of these nations in the millennial kingdom
(Dan 4:2) I am delighted to tell you about the signs and wonders that the most high God has done for me.
(Dan 4:3) "How great are his signs!

How mighty are his wonders!

His kingdom will last forever,³

and his authority continues from one generation to the next."

(Dan 4:4) ***Nebuchadnezzar Dreams of a Tree Chopped Down***

(4:1)⁴ I, Nebuchadnezzar, was relaxing in my home,⁵ living luxuriously⁶ in my palace.

(Dan 4:5) I saw a dream that⁷ frightened me badly. The things I imagined while lying on my bed — these visions of my mind — were terrifying me.

(Dan 4:6) So I issued an order⁸ for all the wise men of Babylon to be brought⁹ before me so that they could make known to me the interpretation of the dream.

(Dan 4:7) When the magicians, astrologers, wise men, and diviners entered, I recounted the dream for them. But they were unable to make known its interpretation to me.

(Dan 4:8) Later Daniel entered (whose name is Belteshazzar after the name of my god,¹⁰ and in whom there is a spirit of the holy gods). I recounted the dream for him as well, (Dan 4:9) saying, "Belteshazzar, chief of the magicians, in whom I know there to be a spirit of the holy gods and whom no mystery baffles, consider¹¹ my dream that I saw and set forth its interpretation!

(Dan 4:10) Here are the visions of my mind¹² while I was on my bed.

While I was watching,

there was a tree in the middle of the land.¹³

It was enormously tall.¹⁴

(Dan 4:11) The tree grew large and strong.

Its top reached far into the sky;

it could be seen¹⁵ from the borders of all the land.¹⁶

(Dan 4:12) Its foliage was attractive and its fruit plentiful;

on it there was food enough for all.

Under it the wild animals¹⁷ used to seek shade,

and in its branches the birds of the sky used to nest.

All creatures¹⁸ used to feed themselves from it.

(Dan 4:13) While I was watching in my mind's visions¹⁹ on my bed,

a holy sentinel²⁰ came down from heaven.

(Dan 4:14) He called out loudly²¹ as follows:²²

'Chop down the tree and lop off its branches!

Strip off its foliage

and scatter its fruit!

Let the animals flee from under it

and the birds from its branches!

(Dan 4:15) But leave its taproot²³ in the ground,

with a band of iron and bronze around it²⁴

surrounded by the grass of the field.

Let it become damp with the dew of the sky,

and let it live with²⁵ the animals in the grass of the land.

(Dan 4:16) Let his mind²⁶ be altered from that of a human being,

and let an animal's mind be given to him,

and let seven periods of time²⁷ go by for²⁸ him.

(Dan 4:17) This announcement is by the decree of the sentinels;

this decision is by the pronouncement of the holy ones,

so that²⁹ those who are alive may understand

that the Most High has authority over human kingdoms,³⁰
and he bestows them on whomever he wishes.

He establishes over them even the lowliest of human beings.'

(Dan 4:18) "This is the dream that I, King Nebuchadnezzar, saw. Now you, Belteshazzar, declare its³¹ interpretation, for none of the wise men in³² my kingdom are able to make known to me the interpretation. But you can do so, for a spirit of the holy gods is in you."

(Dan 4:19) ***Daniel Interprets Nebuchadnezzar's Dream***

Then Daniel (whose name is also Belteshazzar) was upset for a brief time;³³ his thoughts were alarming him. The king said, "Belteshazzar, don't let the dream and its interpretation alarm you." But Belteshazzar replied, "Sir,³⁴ if only the dream were for your enemies and its interpretation applied to your adversaries!

(Dan 4:20) The tree that you saw that grew large and strong, whose top reached to the sky, and which could be seen³⁵ in all the land, (Dan 4:21) whose foliage was attractive and its fruit plentiful, and from which there was food available for all, under whose branches wild animals³⁶ used to live, and in whose branches birds of the sky used to nest — (Dan 4:22) it is you,³⁷ O king! For you have become great and strong. Your greatness is such that it reaches to heaven, and your authority to the ends of the earth.

(Dan 4:23) As for the king seeing a holy sentinel coming down from heaven and saying, 'Chop down the tree and destroy it, but leave its taproot in the ground, with a band of iron and bronze around it, surrounded by the grass of the field. Let it become damp with the dew of the sky, and let it

live with the wild animals, until seven periods of time go by for him' — (Dan 4:24) this is the interpretation, O king! It is the decision of the Most High that this has happened to my lord the king.

(Dan 4:25) You will be driven³⁸ from human society,³⁹ and you will live⁴⁰ with the wild animals. You will be fed⁴¹ grass like oxen,⁴²

and you will become damp with the dew of the sky. Seven periods of time will pass by for you, before⁴³ you understand that the Most High is ruler over human kingdoms and gives them to whomever he wishes.

(Dan 4:26) They said to leave the taproot of the tree, for your kingdom will be restored to you when you come to understand that heaven⁴⁴ rules.

(Dan 4:27) Therefore, O king, may my advice be pleasing to you. Break away from your sins by doing what is right, and from your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor. Perhaps your prosperity will be prolonged."⁴⁵

(Dan 4:28) Now all of this happened⁴⁶ to King Nebuchadnezzar.

(Dan 4:29) After twelve months, he happened to be walking around on the battlements⁴⁷ of the royal palace of Babylon.

(Dan 4:30) The king uttered these words: "Is this not the great Babylon that I have built for a royal residence⁴⁸ by my own mighty strength⁴⁹ and for my majestic honor?"

(Dan 4:31) While these words were still on the king's lips,⁵⁰ a voice came down from heaven: "It is hereby announced to you,⁵¹ King Nebuchadnezzar, that your kingdom has been removed from you!

(Dan 4:32) You will be driven from human society, and you will live with the wild animals. You will be fed grass like oxen, and seven periods of time will pass by for you before⁵² you understand that the Most High is ruler over human kingdoms and gives them to whomever he wishes."

(Dan 4:33) Now in that very moment⁵³ this pronouncement about⁵⁴ Nebuchadnezzar came true.⁵⁵ He was driven from

human society, he ate grass like oxen, and his body became damp with the dew of the sky, until his hair became long like an eagle's feathers, and his nails like a bird's claws.⁵⁶

(Dan 4:34) But at the end of the appointed time⁵⁷ I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up⁵⁸ toward heaven, and my sanity returned to me.

I extolled the Most High,

and I praised and glorified the one who lives forever.

For his authority is an everlasting authority,

and his kingdom extends from one generation to the next.

(Dan 4:35) All the inhabitants of the earth are regarded as nothing.⁵⁹

He does as he wishes with the army of heaven

and with those who inhabit the earth.

No one slaps⁶⁰ his hand

and says to him, 'What have you done?'

(Dan 4:36) At that time my sanity returned to me. I was restored⁶¹ to the honor of my kingdom, and my splendor returned to me. My ministers and my nobles were seeking me out, and I was reinstated⁶² over my kingdom. I became even greater than before.

(Dan 4:37) Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, for all his deeds are right and his

ways are just. He is able to bring down those who live⁶³ in pride.

(Dan 5:1) ***Belshazzar Sees Mysterious Handwriting on a Wall***

King Belshazzar¹ prepared a great banquet² for a thousand of his nobles, and he was drinking wine in front of³ them all.⁴

(Guzik)

Dan 5:1-31

DANIEL 5 - THE WRITING ON THE WALL

A. A disturbing message from God.

1. (Dan_5:1-4) Belshazzar's great, blasphemous feast.

Belshazzar the king made a great feast for a thousand of his lords, and drank wine in the presence of the thousand. While he tasted the wine, Belshazzar gave the command to bring the gold and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple which *had been* in Jerusalem, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. Then they brought the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple of the house of God which *had been* in Jerusalem; and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone.

a. **Belshazzar the king:** When we come to Daniel 5, Nebuchadnezzar is no longer the king of Babylon. How did it come from Nebuchadnezzar to **Belshazzar**? The ancient historian Berosus gives us the following order of events: ·

Nebuchadnezzar dies after a 43-year reign

· His son, *Evil-Merodach* (described in 2Ki_25:27-30 and Jer_52:31-34) rules for only two years when he is assassinated by his brother-in-law Neriglassar, because his rule was arbitrary and licentious

Neriglassar (mentioned as Nergalsharezer in Jer_39:3; Jer_39:13) rules for four years until he dies a natural death · His son, *Laborosoarchod*, only a child and of diminished mental capacity, rules for only nine months when he is beaten to death by a gang of conspirators

· The conspirators appoint *Nabonidus*, one of their gang, to be king. He rules until Cyrus the Persian conquers Babylon

b. **Belshazzar the king**: For a long time, historians and archaeologists knew that Nabonidus was said to be the last king of Babylon, not **Belshazzar** (who was Nabonidus' eldest son). The solution to this so-called discrepancy was apparent when evidence was uncovered indicating not only Belshazzar's association with Nabonidus on the throne, but also

demonstrating that during the last part of his reign Nabonidus lived in Arabia and left the conduct of the kingdom of Babylon to his eldest son **Belshazzar**.

i. There was no additional mention of **Belshazzar**, the eldest son and co-regent with Nabonidus, until the *Nabonidus Cylinder* was discovered in this century. It is now displayed in the British Museum.

ii. According to Babylonian records, Belshazzar became coregent in the third year of Nabonidus' reign (553 B.C.) and continued in that capacity till the fall of Babylon (539 B.C.).

c. It is most likely that at the time of Daniel 5, Nabonidus had gone out to fight the Medo-Persian army, and had been already captured. Those armies now surrounded Babylon, and were looking for a way into the strongly defended city.

d. **Made a great feast for a thousand of his lords**: Belshazzar was not afraid of the siege surrounding the city. He was confident because of Babylon's impressive defenses and his vast supplies.

i. Conservative calculations set the dimensions of the ancient city of Babylon like this:

· The outer walls were 17 miles long

- These walls were 22 feet thick and 90 feet high
- The outer walls had guard towers another 100 feet high
- The city gates were made of bronze
- A system of inner and outer walls and moats made the city very secure

e. **Which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple:** Nebuchadnezzar was not the direct father of Belshazzar. Either he was his grandfather through his mother's side, or he was his father in the sense of having previously occupied the throne Belshazzar now sat on. Either usage of the term **father** was accepted in ancient times.

f. **They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze and iron, wood and stone:** The scene of partying while a hostile army surrounds the city reminds us of the spirit of our age. Many today carry the idea that the best response to the seeming danger of the times is to forget about it and escape into the pursuit of pleasure.

i. God does not condemn having a good time, but can He be glorified in it? Can God be invited to your party?

ii. In Eph_5:18 Paul calls drunkenness *dissipation*; drunkenness is a *waste* of resources that should be submitted to Jesus. John Trapp writes of drinking "all the three outs" - "that is, ale out of the pot, money out of the purse, and wit out of the head." (Trapp's commentary on Gal_5:21)

g. **They brought the gold vessels that had been taken from the temple of the house of God which had been in Jerusalem:** Belshazzar was foolish enough to not only lose all semblance of self-control at this party, but also to openly mock God. He committed the sin of *sacrilege*, something few people are concerned with today.

i. Gathering the vessels from the Jewish temple served the purpose of reminding the partiers of a previous victory, and Belshazzar hoped it would boost morale. "As if these dung-hill deities had mastered and spoiled the God of

Israel . . . This was blasphemy in a high degree, and therefore presently punished by God.” (Trapp)

ii. “The Rabbins have a tradition, that Belshazzar, seeing the seventy years spoken of by Jeremiah expired, and the Jews by the coming on of another monarch, not delivered, kept this feast in contempt of that prophecy and people.”

(Trapp)

iii. In Babylon, a large court - 56 by 170 feet - has been unearthed, decorated with Greek columns. This is probably where the feast of Daniel 5 took place.

2. (Dan_5:5) God writes a message on a wall.

In the same hour the fingers of a man’s hand appeared and wrote opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king’s palace; and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.

a. **The fingers of a man’s hand appeared:** God can and sometimes does communicate to man in unexpected and even shocking ways. Here, a hand mysteriously appears and writes on the wall.

b. **The king saw the part of the hand that wrote:** This, of course, is where we get our proverbial phrase *the writing on the wall*.

3. (Dan_5:6-9) Belshazzar’s reaction to the message, and his call for someone to interpret it.

Then the king’s countenance changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his hips were loosened and his knees knocked against each other. The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. The king spoke, saying to the wise *men* of Babylon, “Whoever reads this writing, and tells me its interpretation, shall be clothed with purple and *have* a chain of gold around his neck; and he shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.” Now all the king’s wise *men* came, but they could not read the writing, or make known to the king its interpretation. Then King Belshazzar was greatly troubled,

his countenance was changed, and his lords were astonished.

a. **The joints of his hips were loosed and his knees knocked:** Daniel's vivid description shows us that Belshazzar was terrified. His carefree partying was so shallow that it turned from merry to terrified in a moment. This shows that his conscience was active beneath his energetic partying.

i. After all, if Belshazzar could not *understand* the writing, why should it trouble him so? It troubled him because his own conscience testified against him.

ii. "The writing on the wall he could neither read nor understand; but his conscience had written bitter things against him, which now being held to the fire of God's wrath become legible." (Trapp)

b. **Whoever reads the writing, and tells me its interpretation:** "For the king the difficulty was not to give the 'dictionary definition' of the terms, but to see what significance they had for him." (Baldwin).

c. **He shall be the third ruler in the kingdom:** Archaeologists have discovered why Belshazzar offered the interpreter of the dream the **third** place in the kingdom. The real king was Nabonidus, and his son Belshazzar ruled as *second* in the kingdom. Belshazzar couldn't give away the second place in the kingdom, because he was the second in the kingdom at the time. The best he had to offer was the **third** place.

d. **The could not read the writing, or make know to the king its interpretation:** When Daniel comes to interpret these words, it doesn't seem so hard to figure out. It may be that God deliberately put a veil over the minds of these men so Daniel would be called. Others - like Adam Clarke - suppose that the Babylonian wise men could not read the writing because it was in Hebrew.

4. (Dan_5:10-12) Daniel is recommended as an interpreter of the message.

The queen, because of the words of the king and his lords, came to the banquet hall. The queen spoke, saying, “O king, live forever!

Do not let your thoughts trouble you, nor let your countenance change. There is a man in your kingdom in whom *is* the Spirit of the Holy God. And in the days of your father, light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, were found in him; and King Nebuchadnezzar your father; your father the king; made him chief of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, *and* soothsayers. Inasmuch as an excellent spirit, knowledge, understanding, interpreting dreams, solving riddles, and explaining enigmas were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar, now let Daniel be called, and he will give the interpretation.”

a. **The queen . . . came to the banquet hall:** This **queen** (or queen mother) is hard to identify with certainty. Probably it is Belshazzar’s mother, the daughter of Nebuchadnezzar.

b. **There is a man in your kingdom:** When the wise men were called to explain the writing on the wall to Belshazzar, Daniel apparently was not called. It seems that Daniel was semi-retired, still holding a government office yet “out of the loop.”

c. **This Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar:** The queen refers to Daniel by his Jewish name, showing respect for his faith and background.

5. (Dan_5:13-16) Belshazzar asks Daniel to interpret the message.

Then Daniel was brought in before the king. The king spoke, and said to Daniel, “Are you that Daniel who is one of the captives from Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah? I have heard of you, that the Spirit of God *is* in you, and *that* light and understanding and excellent wisdom are found in you. Now the wise *men*, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing and

make known to me its interpretation, but they could not give the interpretation of the thing. And I have heard of you, that you can give interpretations and explain enigmas. Now if you can read the writing and make known to me its interpretation, you shall be clothed with purple and *have* a chain of gold around your neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.”

a. **Then Daniel was brought in before the king:** When everything seems great - when the party is going non-stop - God and His servants are mocked, neglected, and hidden away. But when the hand of heaven writes on the walls of one's life a sobering message, panic-stricken worldlings cry out for the one who has the Spirit of God.

b. **I have heard of you:** Since Belshazzar didn't think to call for Daniel himself, it seems that his “hearing” of Daniel was either long ago or just now by the queen.

i. “This silly and shallow prince hath nothing to say but what was put into his mouth by his wiser grandmother.”

(Trapp)

B. What the message meant.

1. (Dan_5:17-23) Introduction: Daniel describes Belshazzar's sinful pride.

Then Daniel answered, and said before the king, “Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another; yet I will read the writing to the king, and make known to him the interpretation. O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father a kingdom and majesty, glory and honor. And because of the majesty that He gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whomever he wished, he executed; whomever he wished, he kept alive; whomever he wished, he set up; and whomever he wished, he put down. But when his heart was lifted up, and his spirit was hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him. Then he was driven from the sons of men, his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling *was* with the wild

donkeys. They fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till he knew that the Most High God rules in the kingdom of men, and appoints over it whomever He chooses. But you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this. And you have lifted yourself up against the Lord of heaven. They have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines, have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, which do not see or hear or know; and the God who *holds* your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified.”

a. **Let your gifts be for yourself:** Remember that Daniel was troubled when he had to give Nebuchadnezzar bad news (Dan_4:19). This isn't the case here. Daniel is not impressed with this successor of Nebuchadnezzar.

b. **You his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, although you knew all this:** Why is Daniel so harsh?

Because Belshazzar should have know better. Even if he was not raised in a godly home, Romans 1 reminds us that all men know of God through creation. Belshazzar should have known even more through God's dealings with and through Daniel.

We are all responsible to honor God according to what revelation we have.

c. **The God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified:** It would be easy for Belshazzar to think that he never did anything against the God of Israel - at least nothing *too bad*. Yet at the very least, he had **not glorified** the true God, and every creature is obligated to give glory to their Creator.

i. The **breath** of the creature should praise the Creator, but Belshazzar blasphemed God with his breath. The **ways** of the creature should glorify the Creator, but Belshazzar used

his **ways** to mock and offend God. Every creature owes something to the Creator.

ii. “If God held Belshazzar responsible, my friend, for the ray of light which shone across *his* pathway, what will He say to men living in the blaze of light which illuminates the world today? Every unconverted man in this country has more light than Belshazzar had.” (Talbot)

2. (Dan_5:24-28) Daniel tells Belshazzar that God’s judgment is at the door.

“Then the fingers of the hand were sent from Him, and this writing was written. And this is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This *is* the interpretation of *each* word.

MENE: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it;

TEKEL: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting;

PERES: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.”

a. **MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of each word:** “It should be observed, that *each word* stands for a *short sentence*; *mene* signifies NUMERATION; *tekel*, WEIGHING; and *peres*, DIVISION.” (Clarke) · God had Belshazzar’s *number*, and it fell short

· God *weighed* Belshazzar, and he came up light

· God would therefore *divide* Belshazzar’s kingdom to the Medes and the Persians

b. **Weighed in the balances, and found wanting:** A mighty army and brilliant tactics overcame The Babylonian Empire, yet it still *fell from within*. The armies of the Medes and Persians could only conquer because Belshazzar and his kingdom were found lacking in spiritual and moral value.

c. **Given to the Medes and Persians:** The ancient Greek historian Herodotus relates that the Persian King Cyrus conquered Babylon by diverting the flow of the Euphrates into a nearby swamp. This lowered the level of the river so his troops marched through the water and under the river-

gates. They still would not have been able to enter *had not the bronze gates of the inner walls been left inexplicably unlocked*. This was exactly what God predicted in Isa_44:28 to Isa_45:7 and Jer_51:57-58. *God opened the gates of the city of Babylon for Cyrus*, and put it in writing 200 years before it happened!

i. "In October 539 BC, Cyrus advanced into lower Mesopotamia and, leaving Babylon till last, conquered and occupied the surrounding territory. Seeing which way the wind was blowing, Nabonidus of Babylon deserted his city, leaving it in the charge of his son Belshazzar . . . the taking of Babylon was as bloodless and effortless as Daniel 5 implies." (Motyer, in his commentary on Isaiah)

d. The fall of mystery Babylon will be like the fall of real Babylon - sudden, sure, and in the midst of her worst blasphemies.

i. "Empires do not stand by human might, man-made machines and missiles. There is not a wall high enough nor thick enough to prevent a nation from falling when God pronounces that nation's doom." (Strauss).

3. (Dan_5:29) Daniel is promoted.

Then Belshazzar gave the command, and they clothed Daniel with purple and *put* a chain of gold around his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

a. **They clothed Daniel with purple:** Why did Belshazzar so quickly reward Daniel for such harsh words? Either Belshazzar knew that Daniel was right, and bravely tried to do the best under the inevitable circumstances or he disbelieved the whole thing and promoted Daniel in a display of big-hearted fun.

b. **That he should be the third ruler in the kingdom:** Daniel held this post for only a few hours. This shows how temporary the awards and accolades of this world are. In the kingdom that succeeded Belshazzar Daniel was also promoted, but that was due to God, not to Belshazzar.

4. (Dan_5:30-31) The death of Belshazzar and the rise of Darius the Mede.

That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, *being* about sixty-two years old.

a. **That very night:** The word was fulfilled just as Daniel said. God's word is always reliable and true.

b. **Darius the Mede received the kingdom:** Darius was a sub-king under Cyrus the Persian. He is referred to in secular history as Gubaru.

(Dan 5:2) While under the influence⁵ of the wine, Belshazzar issued an order to bring in the gold and silver vessels — the ones that Nebuchadnezzar his father⁶ had confiscated⁷ from the temple in Jerusalem⁸ — so that the king and his nobles, together with his wives and his concubines, could drink from them.⁹

(Dan 5:3) So they brought the gold and silver¹⁰ vessels that had been confiscated from the temple, the house of God¹¹ in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, together with his wives and concubines, drank from them.

(Dan 5:4) As they drank wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone.

(Dan 5:5) At that very moment the fingers of a human hand appeared¹² and wrote on the plaster of the royal palace wall, opposite the lampstand.¹³ The king was watching the back¹⁴ of the hand that was writing.

(Dan 5:6) Then all the color drained from the king's face¹⁵ and he became alarmed.¹⁶ The joints of his hips gave way,¹⁷ and his knees began knocking together.

(Dan 5:7) The king called out loudly¹⁸ to summon¹⁹ the astrologers, wise men, and diviners. The king proclaimed²⁰ to the wise men of Babylon that anyone who could read this inscription and disclose its interpretation would be clothed in purple²¹ and have a golden collar²² placed on his neck and be third ruler in the kingdom.

(Dan 5:8) So all the king's wise men came in, but they were unable to read the writing or to make known its²³ interpretation to the king.

(Dan 5:9) Then King Belshazzar was very terrified, and he was visibly shaken.²⁴ His nobles were completely dumbfounded.

(Dan 5:10) Due to the noise²⁵ caused by the king and his nobles, the queen mother²⁶ then entered the banquet room. She²⁷ said, "O

king, live forever! Don't be alarmed! Don't be shaken!

(Dan 5:11) There is a man in your kingdom who has within him a spirit of the holy gods. In the days of your father, he proved to have²⁸

insight, discernment, and wisdom like that²⁹ of the gods.³⁰ King Nebuchadnezzar your father appointed him chief of the magicians, astrologers, wise men, and diviners.³¹

(Dan 5:12) Thus there was found in this man Daniel, whom the king renamed Belteshazzar, an extraordinary spirit, knowledge, and skill to interpret³² dreams, solve riddles, and decipher knotty problems.³³ Now summon³⁴ Daniel, and he will disclose the interpretation."

(Dan 5:13) So Daniel was brought in before the king. The king said to Daniel, "Are you that Daniel who is one of the captives of Judah, whom my father the king brought from Judah?

(Dan 5:14) I have heard about you, how there is a spirit of the gods in you, and how you have³⁵ insight, discernment, and extraordinary wisdom.

(Dan 5:15) Now the wise men and³⁶ astrologers were brought before me to read this writing and make known to me its interpretation.

But they were unable to disclose the interpretation of the message.

(Dan 5:16) However, I have heard³⁷ that you are able to provide interpretations and to decipher knotty problems. Now if you are able to read this writing and make known to

me its interpretation, you will wear purple and have a golden collar around your neck and be third³⁸ ruler in the kingdom."

(Dan 5:17) ***Daniel Interprets the Handwriting on the Wall***

But Daniel replied to the king, "Keep your gifts, and give your rewards to someone else! However, I will read the writing for the king and make known its³⁹ interpretation.

(Dan 5:18) As for you, O king, the most high God bestowed on your father Nebuchadnezzar a kingdom, greatness, honor, and majesty.⁴⁰

(Dan 5:19) Due to the greatness that he bestowed on him, all peoples, nations, and language groups were trembling with fear⁴¹ before him. He killed whom he wished, he spared⁴² whom he wished, he exalted whom he wished, and he brought low whom he wished.

(Dan 5:20) And when his mind⁴³ became arrogant⁴⁴ and his spirit filled with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and his honor was removed from him.

(Dan 5:21) He was driven from human society, his mind⁴⁵ was changed to that of an animal, he lived⁴⁶ with the wild donkeys, he was fed grass like oxen, and his body became damp with the dew of the sky, until he came to understand that the most high God rules over human kingdoms, and he appoints over them whomever he wishes.

(Dan 5:22) "But you, his son⁴⁷ Belshazzar, have not humbled yourself,⁴⁸ although you knew all this.

(Dan 5:23) Instead, you have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven. You brought before you the vessels from his temple, and you and your nobles, together with your wives and concubines, drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood, and stone — gods⁴⁹ that cannot see or hear or comprehend! But you have not glorified the God who has in his control⁵⁰ your very breath and all your ways!

(Dan 5:24) Therefore the palm of a hand was sent from him, and this writing was inscribed.

(Dan 5:25) "This is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE,⁵¹ TEQEL, and PHARSIN.⁵²

(Dan 5:26) This is the interpretation of the words:⁵³ As for *mene* ⁵⁴ — God has numbered your kingdom's days and brought it to an end.

(Dan 5:27) As for *teqel* — you are weighed on the balances and found to be lacking.

(Dan 5:28) As for *peres* ⁵⁵ — your kingdom is divided and given over to the Medes and Persians."

(Dan 5:29) Then, on Belshazzar's orders,⁵⁶ Daniel was clothed in purple, a golden collar was placed around his neck, and he was proclaimed third ruler in the kingdom.

(Dan 5:30) And in that very night Belshazzar, the Babylonian king,⁵⁷ was killed.⁵⁸

(Dan 5:31) (6:1)⁵⁹ So Darius the Mede took control of the kingdom when he was about sixty-two years old.

(Dan 6:1) ***Daniel is Thrown into a Lions' Den***

It seemed like a good idea to Darius¹ to appoint over the kingdom 120 satraps² who would be in charge of the entire kingdom.

(Guzik)

Dan 6:1-28

DANIEL 6 - IN THE LION'S DEN

This has long been a beloved Bible story - and no wonder. There are so many dramatic features in this story - the jealousy of political subordinates; the vanity of a king; the integrity of a man; the power and preservation of God; and some wild animals and violence!

A. How Daniel was condemned to the lion's den.

1. (Dan_6:1-3) Daniel in the government of Darius.

It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom one hundred and twenty satraps, to be over the whole kingdom; and over these, three governors, of whom Daniel *was* one, that the

satraps might give account to them, so that the king would suffer no loss. Then this Daniel distinguished himself above the governors and satraps, because an excellent spirit *was* in him; and the king gave thought to setting him over the whole realm.

a. **It pleased Darius:** Secular history of this period has no record of a ruler named **Darius**. There are three possible explanations for the Darius of Daniel 6.

i. It may be that **Darius** is simply another name for Cyrus, who ruled of the Medo-Persian Empire during this period.

ii. It may be that **Darius** was actually Cambyses, son of Cyrus, who served under his father as a ruler of Babylon and later inherited the throne of the entire empire.

iii. It may be that **Darius** is an ancient official known as *Gubaru* in ancient documents, whom Cyrus appointed as ruler over Babylon immediately after its capture. It is the opinion of this commentator that this *Gubaru* is the same person as **Darius**. In fact, “Darius” may be an honorific title meaning, “holder of the scepter.”

iv. Ancient documents show that the man Gubaru had the power to make appointments, to assemble an army, to levy taxes, and to possess palaces. Gubaru (Darius) was, in a very real sense, the king over Babylon.

b. **Daniel distinguished himself:** Daniel was one of three leaders directly under Darius, and he shined above the other two leaders because he had **an excellent spirit**. Daniel had a good attitude in his work and life and this made him the object of attack.

2. (Dan_6:4-9) A plot against Daniel is conceived and initiated.

So the governors and satraps sought to find *some* charge against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no charge or fault, because he *was* faithful; nor was there any error or fault found in him. Then these men said, “We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find *it* against him concerning the law of his God.” So these

governors and satraps thronged before the king, and said thus to him: "King Darius, live forever! All the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counselors and advisors, have consulted together to establish a royal statute and to make a firm decree, that whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree and sign the writing, so that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter." Therefore King Darius signed the written decree.

a. **They could find no charge or fault, because he was faithful:** Daniel was such a **faithful** man that those who sought to find a flaw in his actions or character came up empty.

i. Sometimes today a candidate or nominee for office will be set under this kind of scrutiny - imagine looking as hard as you could at a public servant who had been in office some 50 years and finding *nothing wrong*. No fraudulent expense accounts. No intern scandals. No questionable business deals. No gifts from lobbyists. No accusations from his staff.

ii. Simply, there were no skeletons in Daniel's closet. His enemies examined his life and found nothing to attack - they had to make up something.

b. **Nor was there any error or fault found in him:** This isn't to imply that Daniel was actually sinless, but that he was a man of great integrity. We can also say that Daniel was especially blameless in the conduct of his professional life.

i. When he considered Daniel's integrity, Spurgeon bemoaned our modern compromises: "As for Lord Fair-Speech,

Lord Time-Server, Mr. Smooth-Man, Mr. Anything, Mr. Facing-both-Ways, Mr. Two-Tongues, and all the members of their club, Mr. By-Ends included, the entire company of them will be swept away when the Judge comes with the besom of destruction." (Spurgeon)

ii. “Daniel here is not the herald of his own virtue, but the Spirit speaks through his mouth.” (Calvin)

c. **We shall not find any charge against this Daniel unless we find it against him concerning the law of his God:** These men knew Daniel well. They knew he could not be trapped into evil, but they also knew that he would be faithful to **his God** in all circumstances. Do others know the same about us?

i. The world may not know the intricacies of doctrine or the intimacies of worship with God but they can tell a bad temper, selfishness, conceitedness or dishonesty when they see it. “The world is a very poor critic of my Christianity, but it is a very sufficient one of my conduct.” (Maclaren)

d. **Whoever petitions any god or man for thirty days, except you, O king:** If the enemies of Daniel knew him, they also knew Darius. They knew they could appeal to his pride and his desire for a unified kingdom.

i. “The suggested mode of compelling every subject in the former Babylonian domain to acknowledge the authority of Persia seemed a statesmanlike measure that would contribute to the unification of the Middle and Near East. The time limit of one month seemed reasonable.” (Archer)

ii. “What pretence could they urge for so silly an ordinance? Probably to *flatter* the ambition of the king, they pretend to make him *a god* for *thirty* days; so that the whole empire should make prayer and supplication to him and pay him Divine honours! This was the bait; but their real object was to destroy Daniel.” (Clarke)

iii. **All the governors of the kingdom, the administrators and satraps, the counselors and advisors, have consulted together:** Daniel’s enemies also knew that people can be persuaded to do things they wouldn’t normally do if they think everyone else approves of that thing.

iv. Of course, they lied when they said **all the governors**, because Daniel was one of the governors and he was not

consulted.

e. **So that it cannot be changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians:** It was an established principle in the Medo-Persian Empire that when a king formally signed and instituted a decree, it was so binding that not even the king himself could change it.

i. The decrees of a Persian king were unchangeable because he was thought to speak for the gods, who could never be wrong and never needed to change their minds.

f. **Therefore King Darius signed the written decree:**

“Suppose the law of the land were proclaimed, ‘No man shall pray during the remainder of this month, on pain of being cast into a den of lions,’ - how many of you would pray? I think there would be rather a scanty number at the prayer-meeting. Not but what the attendance at prayer-meetings is scanty enough now! but if there were the penalty of being cast into a den of lions, I am afraid the prayer-meeting would be postponed for a month, owing to pressing business, and manifold engagements of one kind and another.” (Spurgeon) 3. (Dan_6:10-15) Daniel’s faithfulness to God causes him to be condemned to the lion’s den.

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days. Then these men assembled and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God. And they went before the king, and spoke concerning the king’s decree: “Have you not signed a decree that every man who petitions any god or man within thirty days, except you, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?” The king answered and said, “The thing *is* true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which does not alter.” So they answered and said before the king, “That Daniel, who is one of the captives from Judah, does not show due regard for you, O king, or for the decree that you have signed, but

makes his petition three times a day.” And the king, when he heard *these* words, was greatly displeased with himself, and set *his* heart on Daniel to deliver him; and he labored till the going down of the sun to deliver him. Then these men approached the king, and said to the king, “Know, O king, that *it is* the law of the Medes and Persians that no decree or statute which the king establishes may be changed.”

a. When Daniel knew that the writing was signed:

Daniel was confronted with a test of loyalties. He wanted to render unto Caesar things that rightfully belonged to Caesar but he would not give to the government that which belonged to God alone.

i. Others might have considered it risky for Daniel pray as was his custom. Daniel knew that the *safest* thing he could do was radically obey God.

ii. It isn't hard to see why people are men-pleasers; it *seems as if* people have the power to hire or fire us; to break our hearts; to slander us; to make our live generally miserable. The power to obey God and stand for Him comes from a settled understanding that God is really in control.

iii. “Unless you are prepared to be in the minority, and now and then to be called ‘narrow,’ ‘fanatic,’ and to be laughed at by men because you will not do what they do, but abstain and resist, then there is little chance of your ever making much of your Christian profession.” (Maclaren)

b. Prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days: Daniel didn't let the decree change his actions one way or another. He didn't do more prayer or less; he simply continued his excellent prayer life.

i. It would have been compromise or pride to change in either direction. “This was not the act of a person courting martyrdom but the continuation of a faithful ministry in prayer which had characterized his long life.” (Walvoord)

ii. What was Daniel's **custom** in prayer?

· He prayed **in his upper room** - this was private prayer, made with no intention to impress others · He prayed with

his windows open toward Jerusalem, remembering the place of sacrifice even when

there was no sacrifice

- He prayed according to Scripture, because in 1 Kings 8 Solomon asked God to give special notice to the prayers of His people when they prayed towards Jerusalem and the temple: *And may You hear the supplication of Your servant and of Your people Israel, when they pray toward this place.* (1Ki_8:3) ·

He knelt down on his knees, praying just as Jesus did, (Luk_22:41), as Stephen (Act_7:60), as Peter (Act_9:40), as Paul and other leaders in the church (Act_20:36), and as Luke (Act_21:5). “Kneeling is a begging posture and we must all come to God as beggars.” (Heslop)

- He prayed **three times that day**, knowing that though a little prayer is good, much prayer is far better.

We also remember that Daniel was one of three governors over an empire - yet still had time to pray. “That does not tell you how often he prayed, but how often he was in the posture of prayer. Doubtless he prayed 300 times a day if necessary-his heart was always having commerce with the skies; but thrice a day he prayed formally.” (Spurgeon)

- He **prayed and gave thanks**, because great prayer is filled with thanksgiving. “Prayer and praise should always go up to heaven arm in arm, like twin angels walking up Jacob’s ladder, or like kindred aspirations soaring up to the Most High.” (Spurgeon)

c. **Found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God:** They found Daniel just as they knew they would - deep in prayer. For Daniel prayer was both communing with God and pleading for His will to be accomplished (**supplication**).

d. **Does not show due regard for you, O king:** This was not true. Daniel intended no disrespect for the king, only a higher respect for God.

e. **And the king, when he heard these words, was greatly displeased with himself:** There is a lot to like about King Darius, and one of the admirable things about him is that he is **displeased with himself**. Instead of blaming others, he knew that he was at fault. We can be sure that he wasn't happy with Daniel's enemies, but he knew that ultimately he was responsible.

i. Like Darius, our foolish decisions often haunt us. Often all we can do is pray and ask God to mercifully and miraculously intervene when we make foolish decisions.

f. **He labored till the going down of the sun:** This means that he worked as long as he could. According to eastern custom the execution was carried out on the evening of the day that the accusation was made and found valid.

B. Daniel is preserved in the lion's den.

1. (Dan_6:16-18) Daniel's time in the lion's den.

So the king gave the command, and they brought Daniel and cast *him* into the den of lions. *But* the king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you." Then a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signets of his lords, that the purpose concerning Daniel might not be changed.

Now the king went to his palace and spent the night fasting; and no musicians were brought before him. Also his sleep went from him.

a. **Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you:** Darius had faith, and it was faith born out of Daniel's faith in the Lord. The idea is, "I tried my best to save you Daniel, but I failed, Now it is up to your God."

b. **You serve continually:** This made Daniel's testimony. Many of us occasionally display godly character and wisdom before the world, but we then counter-act our good by then being bad. Daniel's testimony was made by *continual* service.

c. **The king sealed it:** This may have been to protect Daniel as much as to make sure a man didn't rescue Daniel. Darius knew that Daniel had powerful enemies who might kill him if the lions didn't.

d. **His sleep went from him:** Undoubtedly, Daniel had a better night's rest than Darius. We can be sure that Daniel prayed in the lions' den, because it was simply his habit to pray. He did not need to *start praying* on this remarkable occasion because the *habit of prayer* was well ingrained in his life.

i. "When our lives are centred in God, we can ever afford to leave circumstances to the compulsion of the One in Whom we trust. The occasional is always affected by the habitual." (Morgan)

ii. Perhaps Daniel prayed Psa_22:21-22 : *Save Me from the lion's mouth . . . I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will praise You.*

iii. "In any case he must have had a glorious night. What with the lions, and with angels all night to keep him company, he was spending the night-watches in grander style than Darius." (Spurgeon)

2. (Dan_6:19-23) Daniel is found alive after the night in the lion's den.

Then the king arose very early in the morning and went in haste to the den of lions. And when he came to the den, he cried out with a lamenting voice to Daniel. The king spoke, saying to Daniel, "Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able to deliver you from the lions?" Then Daniel said to the king, "O king, live forever! My God sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, so that they have not hurt me, because I was found innocent before Him; and also, O king, I have done no wrong before you." Then the king was exceedingly glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God.

a. **Very early in the morning:** Since he could not sleep, this was easy for Darius. We imagine him waiting for the first glimmer of dawn so he can see how Daniel fared.

b. **Then Daniel said to the king:** When Darius heard Daniel's voice he knew that he had survived through the night.

The lions wouldn't or couldn't touch this servant of God, and Daniel is recognized in Heb_11:33 as one who by faith *stopped the mouths of lions* (Heb_11:33).

c. **God sent His angel to shut the lions' mouth:** We don't know if Daniel *saw* an angel or not, but he certainly knew that **God sent His angel** to rescue him. Heb_1:14 says angels are *ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation*.

i. "How the angel stopped the lions' mouths, whether by the brightness of his presence, or threatening them with his finger (Num_22:27; Num_22:33), or by making a rumble amongst them like that of an empty cart upon the stones, or by presenting unto them a light fire (which things lions are said to be terrified with), or by causing in them a satiety, or by working upon their fantasy, we need not inquire." (Trapp)

d. **I have done no wrong before you:** But didn't Daniel break the king's law? Yes, but he did not go *against* the king nor against the king's *best interests*. Daniel is an example of obedient disobedience.

e. **Because he believed in his God:** Daniel was preserved through *faith*. Though his cause was righteous and he was unjustly accused those things in themselves did not protect him before the lions. Daniel needed a living, abiding faith in God, even in the most difficult circumstances.

i. "Though they were savage and hunger-starved, yet Daniel was kept from the paws and jaws of these many fierce and fell lions by the power of God through faith." (Trapp)

ii. There is an instructive order here. The power of God sent an angel to protect Daniel, in response to a prayer of faith

coming from a consistent, abiding walk.

3. (Dan_6:24) The fate of those who plotted against Daniel.

And the king gave the command, and they brought those men who had accused Daniel, and they cast *them* into the den of lions; them, their children, and their wives; and the lions overpowered them, and broke all their bones in pieces before they ever came to the bottom of the den.

a. **The king gave the command:** No one had to *ask* Darius to do this. He was ready and willing to bring justice to those who plotted against Daniel, and also to **their children, and their wives**.

i. This is obviously severe, but it was also according to ancient customs among the Persians. An ancient writer named Ammianus Marcellinus wrote of the Persians, "The laws among them are formidable . . . by which, on account of the guilt of one, all the kindred perish."

ii. Darius probably would have cast these accusers to the lions even if Daniel had perished in the lion's den.

b. **The lions overpowered them . . . before they ever came to the bottom of the den:** This proved that it genuinely was angelic protection that saved Daniel. Daniel's accusers perished in the same trap they set for Daniel.

i. This illustrates the cross-in-reverse: the guilty punished in the place of the innocent.

ii. We also have an illustration of a principle of spiritual warfare: God will cause our enemy to be impaled on the same snare set for us (Psa_7:14-16).

4. (Dan_6:25-28) Darius decrees that all must honor the God of Daniel.

Then King Darius wrote: To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth: Peace be multiplied to you. I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom *men must* tremble and fear before the God of Daniel. For He *is* the living God, and steadfast forever; His kingdom *is the one* which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion *shall endure* to the end. He delivers and rescues, and He works

signs and wonders In heaven and on earth, who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

a. **Then King Darius wrote:** The Book of Daniel follows a familiar pattern. God's people stand firm in their convictions, God honors and protects them, and the testimony of God's work makes the ungodly see and tell of the greatness of God.

- Daniel and his four friends stood firm and Nebuchadnezzar saw the fruit of it (Dan_1:20)

- Daniel boldly and wisely interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream and king honored Daniel and his God (Dan_2:46-47)

- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego stood firm and Nebuchadnezzar gave glory to God (Dan_3:28-30)

- Daniel boldly told Nebuchadnezzar the truth and the king humbled himself and gave glory to God (Dan_4:34-37)

- Daniel stood firm and boldly told Belshazzar the truth and the king honored Daniel (Dan_5:29)

i. The point is plain: when we stand firm in godly convictions and honor God *even when it costs us*, others will see the testimony and be impressed. Could we not pray, "Lord, let me bear a cost for You for Your glory"?

b. **The God of Daniel:** In a small way, this helps us diagnose Darius' spiritual condition. It isn't enough to say, "**the God of Daniel.**" Saving faith says, "the God of Darius."

c. **Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian:** Some take this to mean that Darius *was* Cyrus the Persian.

d. **Daniel prospered:** This is the last link in a long chain set through this chapter, where we see Daniel

- Plotted against

- Praying

- Praising

- Persistently serving
- Persecuted
- Protected
- Preserved
- Preferred
- Prospered

(Dan 6:2) Over them would be three supervisors, one of whom was Daniel. These satraps were accountable³ to them, so that the king's interests might not incur damage.

(Dan 6:3) Now this Daniel was distinguishing himself above the other supervisors and the satraps, for he had an extraordinary spirit. In fact, the king intended to appoint him over the entire kingdom.

(Dan 6:4) Consequently the supervisors and satraps were trying to find⁴ some pretext against Daniel in connection with administrative matters.⁵ But they were unable to find any such damaging evidence,⁶ because he was trustworthy and guilty of no negligence or corruption.⁷

(Dan 6:5) So these men concluded,⁸ "We won't find any pretext against this man Daniel unless it is⁹ in connection with the law of his God."

(Dan 6:6) So these supervisors and satraps came by collusion¹⁰ to the king and said¹¹ to him, "O King Darius, live forever!

(Dan 6:7) To all the supervisors of the kingdom, the prefects, satraps, counselors, and governors it seemed like a good idea for a royal edict to be issued and an interdict to be enforced. For the next thirty days anyone who prays¹² to any god or human other than you, O king, should be thrown into a den of lions.

(Dan 6:8) Now let the king issue a written interdict¹³ so that it cannot be altered, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be changed.¹⁴

(Dan 6:9) So King Darius issued the written interdict.

(Dan 6:10) When Daniel realized¹⁵ that a written decree had been issued, he entered his home, where the

windows¹⁶ in his upper room opened toward Jerusalem.¹⁷ Three¹⁸ times daily he was¹⁹ kneeling²⁰ and offering prayers and thanks to his God just as he had been accustomed to do previously.

(Dan 6:11) Then those officials who had gone to the king²¹ came by collusion and found Daniel praying and asking for help before his God.

(Dan 6:12) So they approached the king and said to him,²² "Did you not issue an edict to the effect that for the next thirty days anyone who prays to any god or human other than to you, O king, would be thrown into a den of lions?" The king replied, "That is correct,²³

according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which cannot be changed."

(Dan 6:13) Then they said to the king, "Daniel, who is one of the captives²⁴ from Judah, pays no attention to you, O king, or to the edict that you issued. Three times daily he offers his prayer."²⁵

(Dan 6:14) When the king heard this,²⁶ he was very upset and began thinking about²⁷ how he might rescue Daniel. Until late afternoon²⁸ he was struggling to find a way to rescue him.

(Dan 6:15) Then those men came by collusion to the king and²⁹ said to him,³⁰ "Recall,³¹ O king, that it is a law of the Medes and Persians that no edict or decree that the king issues can be changed."

(Dan 6:16) So the king gave the order,³² and Daniel was brought and thrown into a den³³ of lions. The king consoled³⁴ Daniel by saying, "Your God whom you continually serve will rescue you!"

(Dan 6:17) Then a stone was brought and placed over the opening³⁵ to the den. The king sealed³⁶ it with his signet ring and with those³⁷ of his nobles so that nothing could be changed with regard to Daniel.

(Dan 6:18) Then the king departed to his palace. But he spent the night without eating, and no diversions³⁸ were

brought to him. He was unable to sleep.³⁹

(Dan 6:19) ***God Rescues Daniel from the Lions***

In the morning, at the earliest sign of daylight, the king got up and rushed to the lions' den.

(Dan 6:20) As he approached the den, he called out to Daniel in a worried voice,⁴⁰ "Daniel, servant of the living God, was your God whom you continually serve able to rescue you from the lions?"

(Dan 6:21) Then Daniel spoke to⁴¹ the king, "O king, live forever!

(Dan 6:22) My God sent his angel and closed the lions' mouths so that they have not harmed me, because I was found to be innocent before him. Nor have I done any harm to you, O king."

(Dan 6:23) Then the king was delighted and gave an order to haul Daniel up from the den. So Daniel was hauled up out of the den. He had no injury of any kind, because he had trusted in his God.

(Dan 6:24) The king gave another order,⁴² and those men who had maliciously accused⁴³ Daniel were brought and thrown⁴⁴ into the lions' den — they, their children, and their wives.⁴⁵ They did not even reach the bottom of the den before the lions overpowered them and crushed all their bones.

(Dan 6:25) Then King Darius wrote to all the peoples, nations, and language groups who were living in all the land: "Peace and prosperity!⁴⁶

(Dan 6:26) I have issued an edict that throughout all the dominion of my kingdom people are to revere and fear the God of Daniel.

"For he is the living God;

he endures forever.

His kingdom will not be destroyed;

his authority is forever.⁴⁷

(Dan 6:27) He rescues and delivers

and performs signs and wonders

in the heavens and on the earth.

He has rescued Daniel from the power⁴⁸ of the lions!"

(Dan 6:28) So this Daniel prospered during the reign of Darius and⁴⁹ the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

(Dan 7:1) ***Daniel has a Vision of Four Animals Coming up from the Sea***

In the first¹ year of King Belshazzar of Babylon, Daniel had² a dream filled with visions³ while he was lying on his bed. Then he wrote down the dream in summary fashion.⁴
(Guzik)

Dan 7:1-28

DANIEL 7 - A SURVEY OF FIVE WORLD EMPIRES

A. The four beasts.

1. (Dan_7:1) Introduction to the vision.

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head *while* on his bed. Then he wrote down the dream, telling the main facts.

a. **In the first year of Belshazzar:** This vision came to Daniel after the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, but before the Babylonian Empire was conquered by the Medo-Persian Empire.

i. Daniel chapters 1 through 6 describe the life and times of Daniel. Chapters 7 through 12 describe visions Daniel had. In order of events, the vision described in Daniel 7 took place during the time between Daniel chapters 4 and 5.

b. **Daniel had a dream and visions:** This first vision - one of four described between Daniel 7 through 12 - is the most comprehensive. The other three visions go into greater detail within the general framework of this first vision.

c. **Telling the main facts:** Daniel *could have* given us more detail but the Holy Spirit only wanted him to write the **main facts**. We may wish that Daniel went into greater detail, but he didn't.

2. (Dan_7:2-3) Four beasts and where they come from.

Daniel spoke, saying, "I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other."

a. **Stirring up the Great Sea:** This is almost certainly the Mediterranean Sea. Each one of the empires mentioned in this vision border on the Mediterranean Sea.

i. **Stirring up** has the idea of chaos and tumult. "To the Hebrews the sea was both dangerous and mysterious, a restless element but not beyond the Lord's power to tame." (Baldwin).

ii. The sea is sometimes used as a picture of Gentile nations (Psa_74:13, Psa_89:9, Isa_57:20).

b. **The four winds of heaven:** Some see these **winds** as a description of the sovereign power of God striving with men (Psa_35:5, Psa_48:7, Psa_107:25 Isa_27:8 and Isa_41:16). Others (like Strauss) suggest the four winds are satanic forces, as mentioned by Rev_7:1.

c. **And four great beasts came up from the sea:** Four large, ferocious animals emerge from the Great Sea, each one distinct from the other.

3. (Dan_7:4-6) A description of the first three beasts.

The first *was* like a lion, and had eagle's wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man's heart was given to it. And suddenly another beast, a second, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and *had* three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: "Arise, devour much flesh!" After this I looked, and there was another, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it.

a. **The first was like a lion:** The first beast is more majestic than any of the following beasts (lions and eagles are "kings"

of their realms). But this majestic beast is humbled (**wings were plucked off**) and made human (**a man's heart was given to it**).

i. A little later (Dan_7:17) Daniel tells us that these four beasts are four kingdoms ruling over the earth. The first kingdom is the Babylonian Empire, represented by a **lion** and an **eagle**. This fits in well with the majesty and authority of Nebuchadnezzar in his reign over the empire of Babylon.

ii. Jeremiah used both the lion and the eagle as pictures of Nebuchadnezzar (Jer_49:19-22), and Babylon's winged lions can be seen the British Museum today.

b. **A second, like a bear:** The second beast doesn't have the majestic bearing of either the lion or the eagle. A **bear** is slower, stronger, and more crushing than a lion - and this bear has a voracious appetite for conquest (**Arise, devour much flesh!**).

i. The **bear** represents the Medo-Persian Empire, succeeding the Babylonian Empire. In this partnership between the Medes and the Persians, the Persians dominated the relationship. Most think the **three ribs** are their three great conquests: Babylon, Egypt and Lydia.

ii. The slow, crushing armies of the Medo-Persian Empire were well known. They simply overwhelmed their opponents with superior size and strength. "The Medes and Persians are compared to a *bear* on account of their *cruelty* and *thirst after blood*, a bear being a most voracious and cruel animal." (Clarke) iii. **Arise, devour much flesh**: "The command to arise and devour much flesh indicates the extreme cruelties often practiced by the Persians, and the wide extent of their conquests." (Ironsides).

iv. Liberal commentators have a vested interest in identifying the bear with *only* the Median state, and not the Medo-Persian Empire. They assign the third beast to the Persian Empire, and the fourth to Alexander's Greek empire, so as to remove (even for a second century author) any element of predictive prophecy. Their analysis doesn't fit. There are many good reasons why the second kingdom could not be exclusively the Median kingdom.

- The Median kingdom did not follow the Babylonian in historical sequence, but was contemporary with it, even rising to strength *before* the Neo-Babylonian period

- The Median kingdom never had a world position ranking with the Persian, Grecian or Babylonian Empires

- The motivation for the interpretation is solely to remove any reference to Rome - and predictive prophecy

c. **Another, like a leopard**: The **leopard** is known for its sudden, unexpected attacks. This one is especially swift (with **four wings**), and clever (having **four heads**).

i. Each animal is mighty, but dominates its prey in a different way. "The lion devours, the bear crushes, and the leopard springs upon its prey." (Strauss)

ii. The **leopard** represents the Greek Empire. Alexander the Great quickly conquered the civilized world by age 28.

“Nothing in the history of the world, was equal to the conquests of Alexander, who ran through all the countries from Illycium and the Adriatic Sea to the Indian Ocean and the River Ganges; and in *twelve* years subdued part of Europe, and all Asia.” (Clarke)

iii. After his death his empire was divided into four parts (**four heads**). Specifically, the four heads were Casander, Lysimachus, Seleucus, and Ptolemy, who inherited Alexander’s domain after his death.

iv. The Babylonian Empire dominated in Daniel’s day. One might have guessed - especially in the reign of Belshazzar - that the next empire would be the Medo-Persian Empire. But how could Daniel know that the next world empire would be like a leopard in its rise and prominence, and that it would be divided into four parts? This shows a plain principle: God knows the future, and reveals certain details of the future through His prophets. It shows that God lives outside our time domain and can see the future as well as the past. He sees the whole parade of human history, not just the part passing in front of a single spectator. The proof of fulfilled prophecy is exceptionally persuasive; no wonder Peter says *we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts* (2Pe_1:19).

4. (Dan_7:7-8) The fourth beast: a dreadful, horned beast, with one conspicuous horn.

After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It *was* different from all the beasts that *were* before it, and it had ten horns. I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn,

were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words.

a. **A fourth beast, dreadful and terrible:** The fourth beast is indescribable, and uniquely horrific in its power and conquest.

b. **Different . . . it had ten horns:** In the ancient world **horns** expressed an animals power and fearsomeness. This fourth beast is so strong it has **ten horns**.

i. Different people picture this different ways. Some suggest that the ten horns were actually two five-pointed antlers, rather than ten separate horns.

ii. The fourth beast represents the Roman Empire, which was the largest, strongest, most unified and enduring of them all.

iii. "There is an unmistakable correspondence between these horns and the ten toes of the dream image (ch. 2), and the mention of iron in the teeth suggests the legs and toes of iron in that image." (Archer)

c. **Another horn, a little one . . . a mouth speaking pompous words:** Among the ten horns, three are replaced by one horn that is conspicuous for its dominance (**before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots**), intelligence (**eyes like the eyes of a man**), and its boastful talk (**speaking pompous words**).

5. (Dan_7:9-10) The *Ancient of Days* and the scene surrounding his throne.

I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment *was* white as snow, and the hair of His head *was* like pure wool. His throne *was* a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire; a fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.

a. **I watched till thrones were put in place:** The King James Version poorly translates this as *thrones were cast*

down. The New King James Version corrects this and indicates that the **thrones** are established.

i. When the Apostle John saw heaven he also saw **thrones**, but he also saw those who sat on those thrones - the 24 elders described in Rev_4:4. Daniel makes no mention of those who sit on these thrones, perhaps because the 24 elders represent the church and the church was an unrevealed mystery to Old Testament saints (Eph_3:1-7).

b. **And the Ancient of Days was seated:** The **Ancient of Days** is obviously God, but there is debate as to if He is specifically God the Father or God the Son. Most believe it is God the Father, and the white garments and white hair stress the eternal character of God the Father.

i. Dan_7:13 seems to make a distinction between the **Ancient of Days** and the *Son of Man*, and this supports the idea that the **Ancient of Days** is God the Father, not God the Son.

ii. "We ought not to imagine God in his essence to be like any appearance to his own Prophet and other holy fathers, but he put on various appearances, according to man's comprehension, to whom he wished to give some signs of his presence." (Calvin).

c. **His throne was a fiery flame:** This is a brilliant manifestation of God's splendor and the fierce heat of His judgment.

There is something "lava-like" in the stream of fire pouring from the throne; it is a river of vast destructive power.

i. Isa_66:15-15 describe the judgment of God in terms of fire: *For behold, the LORD will come with fire and with His chariots, like a whirlwind, to render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by His sword the LORD will judge all flesh; and the slain of the LORD shall be many.*

d. **Its wheels a burning fire:** Many commentators say that in the ancient eastern world royal thrones were often on

wheels. Yet it is just as likely that they are pictures of the endless activity of God.

e. **A thousand thousands ministered to Him:** This describes the innumerable company of angels surrounding the throne of God.

f. **Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him:** This describes humanity standing before God in judgment.

g. **Court was seated, and the books were opened:** Which books are opened? The Bible describes several books before God.

- The book of the living (Psa_69:28)
- The book of remembrance (Mal_3:16)
- The Book of Life (Php_4:3, Rev_3:5; Rev_13:8; Rev_17:8; Rev_20:12; Rev_20:15; Rev_21:27 and Rev_22:19)

6. (Dan_7:11-14) The conspicuous horn is conquered by the Son of Man.

I watched then because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn was speaking; I watched till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame. As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. I was watching in the night visions, and behold, *one* like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom *the one* which shall not be destroyed.

a. This great passage describes the transition from *human* dominion on earth to *divine* dominion. This happens as **the Son of Man** comes and exercises dominion over the earth. The **Son of Man** succeeds the reign of the fourth beast.

b. **The sound of the pompous words which the horn was speaking:** Here the “little horn” of the fourth beasts

again speaks **pompous words**. The final human dictator we commonly call the Antichrist will be characterized by his boastful, blasphemous speech (Rev_13:5-6).

i. Because of the distinction between the fourth beast and the horn, some conjecture that the beast of Revelation 13 is not the Antichrist but his state. If so, it is a small distinction. To a large extent, a man does represent and personify an entire government or system. When we think of Germany in the 1930s and 1940s, the figures of Hitler as an individual and Nazi Germany as a state are virtually the same.

c. **I watched till the beast was slain . . . the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away:** The fourth beast is destroyed and the others may continue, but without **dominion** of their own. When Jesus sets up His kingdom, the empire of the Antichrist will be completely crushed, yet some nations will continue into the Millennium.

d. **One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven:** The title **Son of Man** was a favorite self-designation of Jesus, used more than 80 times in the gospels. He receives all dominion previously held by the beasts and His reign will be permanent.

i. **His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away:** The reign of Jesus does not last 1,000 years - it is permanent. However, Jesus will rule over this earth before it is remade, with Satan bound for 1,000 years.

B. Interpretation of the dream.

1. (Dan_7:15-16) Daniel's reaction to the vision and request for understanding.

I, Daniel, was grieved in my spirit within *my* body, and the visions of my head troubled me. I came near to one of those who stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me and made known to me the interpretation of these things: a. **Was grieved in my spirit:** Daniel had seen all this, and in more detail than he describes for us. He did not

really understand all that he saw, and was troubled because of his lack of understanding.

b. **Grieved in my spirit within my body:** This shows that our **spirit** indeed dwells **within** the **body**. It is true that the spirit is more important than the body (1Ti_4:8), but the state of the body may have an effect on the state of the spirit.

i. Clarke says that the phrase **my spirit within my body** has the sense of “within its sheath or scabbard.” From this, Clarke says: “Which I think proves, 1. That the human *spirit* is different from the *body*. 2. That it has a proper subsistence indepentendly of the body, which is only its *sheath* for a certain time. 3. That the spirit may exist independently of the body, as the *sword* does independently of its *sheath*.”

2. (Dan_7:17-18) Summary of the vision: four kings are conquered by God, and their kingdoms are given to the people of God.

Those great beasts, which are four, *are* four kings *which* arise out of the earth. “But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.”

a. **Those great beasts, which are four, are four kings which arise out of the earth:** The divine interpretation of the dream shows that this vision covers the same material as Nebuchadnezzar’s vision in Daniel 2, which also described the rise of four empires, which are succeeded by the kingdom of God.

i. Yet Daniel’s vision is different, seeing the kingdoms from God’s perspective, not man’s. Nebuchadnezzar saw the present and future world empires in the form of a stately and noble statue of a man. Here God shows how He sees them: as ferocious and wild animals who devour and conquer without conscience.

ii. When man writes his own history, there is often much self-congratulation, and we seem to be on the verge of paradise.

When God writes human history, a different vision is presented.

iii. Though Jesus is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Rev_5:5), He primarily represents Himself not as a ferocious animal but as a lamb (Rev_5:5-6; Rev_5:8-10).

b. **The saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom:** When the day of the fourth beast is over, then God's people **receive the kingdom**. Yet we know the Roman Empire is long gone - and it doesn't seem that the saints have received the kingdom.

i. This is what prompts many look for either a spiritualized interpretation fulfilled in history, or some kind of restoration of the Roman Empire in the last days, one that will literally fulfill the prophecy of the ten horns and the little horn as well.

ii. **Shall receive the kingdom:** The saints **receive the kingdom**. God gives them the kingdom at the return of Jesus. They do not gain dominion over all these earthly kingdoms before the return of Jesus.

3. (Dan_7:19-22) Daniel's specific request to know about the conspicuous horn.

Then I wished to know the truth about the fourth beast, which was different from all the others, exceedingly dreadful, *with* its teeth of iron and its nails of bronze, *which* devoured, broke in pieces, and trampled the residue with its feet; and the ten horns that *were* on its head, and the other *horn* which came up, before which three fell, namely, that horn which had eyes and a mouth which spoke pompous words, whose appearance *was* greater than his fellows. I was watching; and the same horn was making war against the saints, and prevailing against them, until the Ancient of Days came, and a judgment was made *in favor* of the saints of the Most High, and the time came for the saints to possess the kingdom.

a. **I wished to know the truth about the fourth beast:** There is much of interest in all these four beasts but Daniel

is especially interested in the fourth, most terrible beast - and especially about its conspicuous **horn**.

b. **Exceedingly dreadful, with its teeth of iron and its nails of bronze**: The fourth beast interests Daniel because of its great destructive power, because of the conspicuous horn, and because of its fight against God's people (**the same horn was making war against the saints**).

i. If this horn is the Antichrist, and he fights **against the saints**, does this mean that the church will be on earth as a target of the Antichrist during the tribulation? Not necessarily, because **saints** can indicate the church *or* a Jewish remnant in the tribulation (Rev_12:17; Rev_13:7).

4. (Dan_7:23-27) The meaning of the conspicuous horn and its defeat.

Thus he said: 'The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be different from all *other* kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, trample it and break it in pieces. The ten horns *are* ten kings *who* shall arise from this kingdom. And another shall rise after them; He shall be different from the first *ones*, and shall subdue three kings. He shall speak *pompous* words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law. Then *the saints* shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time. "But the court shall be seated, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy *it* forever. Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him."

a. **The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth**: This initial description of the **fourth beast** fits well with the Roman Empire of ancient history. It did **devour the whole** civilized **earth**, and dominate it completely for about a thousand years.

b. The ten horns are ten kings who shall arise from this kingdom: These **ten kings** *do not* have a literal fulfillment in the Roman Empire of history. If they are literal, they are still in the future. The only way to say this has been fulfilled is to spiritualize this prophecy and take away its plain sense.

i. Many, like Calvin, merely spiritualize this. He insists that what happens in this chapter was fulfilled in history up unto the time of Jesus' first advent, and supposes that the ten horns merely represent a multiplicity of kings under the Roman emperor, and believes that the conspicuous horn is Julius Caesar, and the other Caesars who succeeded him. And for Calvin, *the books were opened* (verse 10) refers to the preaching of the gospel.

ii. But if there are ten toes (Daniel 2) and ten horns (Daniel 7 and Revelation 13, 17) associated with the rule of this final world ruler, why should we "spiritualize" what God has said in at least four different places?

iii. The same "spiritualizing" problems apply if one believes that this is fulfilled in the early church and the passing of the Roman Empire (unlike Calvin who saw fulfillment before the first advent of Jesus).

iv. The conspicuous horn must be the Antichrist, arising out of a confederation of ten nations that is in some way a restoration of the Roman Empire.

c. He shall speak pompous words against the Most High: The little horn speaks pompous, blasphemous words, perhaps like the Fascist Creed of Italy (cited in Talbot):

i. "I believe in Rome Eternal, the Mother of my fatherland; and in Italy, her first born; who was born of her virgin womb by the grace of God; who suffered under the barbarian invader, was crucified, slain, and buried; who descended into the sepulcher, and rose from the dead in the nineteenth century; who ascended to heaven in her glory in 1918 and 1922 [by the march on Rome]; who is seated at the right hand of Mother Rome; who will come thence to

judge the quick and the dead; I believe in the genius of Mussolini; in our Holy Father, Fascism, and in the communion of its martyrs; in the conversion of the Italians; and in the resurrection of the Empire! Amen."

d. **Shall persecute the saints of the Most High:** This speaks of a cruel and systematic pressure, coming from the word "to wear away" or "to wear out," as friction wears clothes or shoes.

i. "To wear out the saints means to harass them continually so that life becomes a wretched existence." (Wood) ii. "Such continual and protracted pressure far more effectively breaks the human spirit than the single moment of crisis that calls for a heroic decision. It is easier to die for the Lord than to live for him under constant harassment and strain." (Archer)

iii. "The Bible predicts no peace-loving world ruler for the last days. We can expect nothing more than greedy commercialism and political imperialism under the most beastly and barbaric type of warfare." (Strauss)

e. **Shall intend to change times and law:** This "little horn" will **intend** to change times and law perhaps as at the French Revolution, where radicals wanted to institute a ten-day work week, and declared 1792 (the year of the Revolution) as "year 1."

i. Seventh-Day Adventists have historically taught that it was the Papacy which "changed the times and law" by moving the Lord's day from Saturday to Sunday. Many Seventh-Day Adventists therefore regard Sunday worship as the sign of the Antichrist.

f. **Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time:** The power of the "little horn" over the **saints** is limited. It will last for three-and-one-half years (**time and times and half a time**). This phrase is used in Revelation (11:2-3, 12:6 and 13:5) to refer to half of the last seven-year period of man's rule on this earth (the seventieth week of Daniel).

g. They shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it forever: In the day of persecution by this blasphemous ruler Jesus will establish His kingdom for His people.

i. Because the kingdom of Jesus immediately succeeds this fourth kingdom no event in the past answers this prediction in the smallest degree. Certainly, the church did not cause a sudden and catastrophic fall of the Roman Empire. "It is questionable whether the Roman Empire had any serious opposition from the Christian church or that the growing power of the church contributed in a major way to its downfall." (Walvoord)

ii. There are three options in interpreting the kingdom's establishment here:

- There is no fulfillment; Daniel is in error
- The fulfillment is symbolic in church history
- The fulfillment is literal, and yet future

h. Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High: This must describe the millennial earth, not our current age or heaven. The **kingdom and dominion** of the earth certainly does not belong to the righteous now. If this describes the eternal state, then what are the **dominions** that **shall serve and obey Him**?

i. We again notice that the **kingdom and dominion . . . shall be given to the** saints. It is something received, not achieved. The church does not convert the world to Jesus' kingdom and give the kingdom to Jesus; He gives it to them.
5. (Dan_7:28) Daniel's troubled reaction to the vision and its interpretation.

This *is* the end of the account. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts greatly troubled me, and my countenance changed; but I kept the matter in my heart.

a. My thoughts greatly troubled me: Many things might trouble Daniel at this vision - such as the ferocity of the

attack to come against his people from the conspicuous horn.

b. **And my countenance changed:** Daniel was convinced this was true, and the word of God. He was so convinced of its truth that his **countenance changed** and he considered what would happen.

(Dan 7:2) Daniel explained:⁵ "I was watching in my vision during the night as⁶ the four winds of the sky⁷ were stirring up the great sea.⁸

(Dan 7:3) Then four large beasts came up from the sea; they were different from one another.

(Dan 7:4) "The first one was like a lion with eagles' wings. As I watched, its wings were pulled off and it was lifted up from the ground. It was made to stand on two feet like a human being, and a human mind⁹ was given to it.¹⁰

(Dan 7:5) "Then¹¹ a second beast appeared, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and there were three ribs¹² in its mouth between its teeth.¹³ It was told,¹⁴ 'Get up and devour much flesh!'

(Dan 7:6) "After these things,¹⁵ as I was watching, another beast¹⁶ like a leopard appeared, with four bird-like wings on its back.¹⁷ This beast had four heads,¹⁸ and ruling authority was given to it.

(Dan 7:7) "After these things, as I was watching in the night visions¹⁹ a fourth beast appeared — one dreadful, terrible, and very strong.²⁰ It had two large rows²¹ of iron teeth. It devoured and crushed, and anything that was left it trampled with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that came before it, and it had ten horns.

(Dan 7:8) "As I was contemplating the horns, another horn — a small one — came up between them, and three of the former horns were torn out by the roots to make room for it.²² This horn had eyes resembling human eyes and a mouth speaking arrogant²³ things.

(Dan 7:9) "While I was watching,

thrones were set up,

and the Ancient of Days²⁴ took his seat.

His attire was white like snow;

the hair of his head was like lamb's²⁵ wool.

His throne was ablaze with fire

and its wheels were all aflame.²⁶

(Dan 7:10) A river of fire was streaming forth

and proceeding from his presence.

Many thousands were ministering to him;

Many tens of thousands stood ready to serve him.²⁷

The court convened²⁸

and the books were opened.

(Dan 7:11) "Then I kept on watching because of the arrogant words of the horn that was speaking. I was watching²⁹ until the beast was killed and its body destroyed and thrown into³⁰ the flaming fire.

(Dan 7:12) As for the rest of the beasts, their ruling authority had already been removed, though they were permitted to go on living³¹ for a time and a season.

(Dan 7:13) I was watching in the night visions,

"And with³² the clouds of the sky³³

one like a son of man³⁴ was approaching.

He went up to the Ancient of Days

and was escorted³⁵ before him.

(Dan 7:14) To him was given ruling authority, honor, and sovereignty.

All peoples, nations, and language groups were serving³⁶ him.

His authority is eternal and will not pass away.³⁷

His kingdom will not be destroyed.³⁸

(Dan 7:15) ***An Angel Interprets Daniel's Vision***

"As for me, Daniel, my spirit was distressed,³⁹ and the visions of my mind⁴⁰ were alarming me.

(Dan 7:16) I approached one of those standing nearby and asked him about the meaning⁴¹ of all this. So he spoke with me and revealed⁴² to me the interpretation of the vision:⁴³

(Dan 7:17) 'These large beasts, which are four in number, represent four kings who will arise from the earth.

(Dan 7:18) The holy ones⁴⁴ of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will take possession of the kingdom forever and ever.'

(Dan 7:19) "Then I wanted to know the meaning⁴⁵ of the fourth beast, which was different from all the others. It was very dreadful, with two rows of iron teeth and bronze claws,

and it devoured, crushed, and trampled anything that was left with its feet.

(Dan 7:20) I also wanted to know⁴⁶ the meaning of the ten horns on its head, and of that other horn which came up and before which three others fell. This was the horn that had eyes⁴⁷ and a mouth speaking arrogant things, whose appearance was more formidable than the others.⁴⁸

(Dan 7:21) While I was watching, that horn began to wage war against the holy ones and was defeating⁴⁹ them, (Dan 7:22) until the Ancient of Days arrived and judgment was rendered⁵⁰ in favor of the holy ones of the Most High. Then the time came for the holy ones to take possession of the kingdom.

(Dan 7:23) "This is what he told me:⁵¹

'The fourth beast means that there will be a fourth kingdom on earth

that will differ from all the other kingdoms.

It will devour all the earth

and will trample and crush it.

(Dan 7:24) The ten horns

mean that ten kings will arise from that kingdom.

Another king will arise after them,

but he will be different from the earlier ones.

He will humiliate⁵² three kings.

(Dan 7:25) He will speak words against the Most High.

He will harass⁵³ the holy ones of the Most High continually.

His intention⁵⁴ will be to change times established by law.⁵⁵

They will be delivered into his hand

For a time, times,⁵⁶ and half a time.

(Dan 7:26) But the court will convene,⁵⁷ and his ruling authority will be removed —

destroyed and abolished forever!

(Dan 7:27) Then the kingdom, authority,

and greatness of the kingdoms under all of heaven

will be delivered to the people of the holy ones⁵⁸ of the Most High.

His kingdom is an eternal kingdom;

all authorities will serve him and obey him.'

(Dan 7:28) "This is the conclusion of the matter. As for me, Daniel, my thoughts troubled me greatly, and the color drained from my face.⁵⁹ But I kept the matter to myself."⁶⁰

(Dan 8:1) ***Daniel Has a Vision of a Goat and a Ram***

1 In the third year² of King Belshazzar's reign, a vision appeared to me, Daniel, after the one that had appeared to me previously.³

(Guzik)

Dan 8:1-27

DANIEL 8 - ANTIOCHUS AND ANTICHRIST

In the ancient manuscripts, the Book of Daniel here resumes using the Hebrew language. The section from Dan_2:4 to Dan_7:28 was written in Aramaic.

A. The vision recounted.

1. (Dan_8:1-2) Introduction to the vision.

In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared *to me*; to me, Daniel; after the one that appeared to me the first time. I saw in the vision, and it so happened while I was looking, that I *was* in Shushan, the citadel, which *is* in the province of Elam; and I saw in the vision that I was by the River Ulai.

a. **The third year of the reign of King Belshazzar:** This vision happened while Babylon was securely in power.

Though the vision will deal with the emergence and destiny of the Greek Empire, the Greek Empire was not much of anything at the time the prophecy came to Daniel.

b. **I was in Shushan, the citadel:** Daniel was in **Shushan** on the king's business (Dan_8:27).

2. (Dan_8:3-4) A mighty ram pushing in different directions.

Then I lifted my eyes and saw, and there, standing beside the river, was a ram which had two horns, and the two horns *were* high; but one *was* higher than the other, and the higher *one* came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward, northward, and southward, so that no animal could withstand him; nor *was there any* that could deliver from his hand, but he did according to his will and became great.

a. **A ram which had two horns:** In this same chapter (Dan_8:20) this **ram** is clearly identified as representing the Medo-Persian Empire, which succeeded the Babylonian Empire.

i. It wasn't a stretch to use a **ram** to represent the Medo-Persian Empire. "Ammianus Marcellinus, a fourth century historian, states that the Persian ruler bore the head of a

ram as he stood at the head of his army.” (Wood) “The ram was the national emblem of Persia, a ram being stamped on Persian coins as well as on the headdress of Persian emperors.” (Strauss)

b. The two horns were high; but one was higher than the other: The ram is noted for the proportion of its two horns - **one was higher than the other**. This was an accurate prediction of the partnership between the Medes and the Persians, because the Persians were larger and stronger in the partnership. They also emerged after the Medes (**the higher one came up last**).

c. Pushing westward, northward, and southward: The Medo-Persian Empire exerted its power to the north, south, and west. It assumed territory but made no major conquests towards the east.

i. “The principle theatre of their wars, says *Calmet*, was against the SCYTHIANS, *northward*; against the GREEKS, *westward*; and against the EGYPTIANS, *southward*.” (Clarke)
3. (Dan_8:5-8) A male goat challenges and conquers the ram.

And as I was considering, suddenly a male goat came from the west, across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground; and the goat *had* a notable horn between his eyes. Then he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing beside the river, and ran at him with furious power. And I saw him confronting the ram; he was moved with rage against him, attacked the ram, and broke his two horns. There was no power in the ram to withstand him, but he cast him down to the ground and trampled him; and there was no one that could deliver the ram from his hand. Therefore the male goat grew very great; but when he became strong, the large horn was broken, and in place of it four notable ones came up toward the four winds of heaven.

a. A male goat came from the west: In this same chapter (Dan_8:21-22) this **male goat** is clearly identified

with Greece and its horns with the rulers of the Greek Empire.

i. From ancient history we know this isn't a strange symbol. The goat was a common representation of the Greek Empire. "*Newton* very properly observes that, *two hundred* years before the time of Daniel, they were called, the *goats' people*." (Clarke) b. **Across the surface of the whole earth, without touching the ground:** The prophetic description of the male goat was proved to be accurate regarding the Greek Empire.

The prophetic description of the male goat was proved to be accurate regarding the Greek Empire.

- The Greek Empire rose **from the west** of previous empires

- The Greek Empire rose with great speed (**suddenly . . . without touching the ground**) · The Greek Empire had a notable ruler, Alexander the Great (**a notable horn**)

- The Greek Empire had a famous war with the Medo-Persian Empire (**I saw him confronting the ram**) · The Greek Empire and the Medo-Persian Empire greatly hated each other (**with furious power . . . moved with rage**). Some of the greatest, fiercest battles of ancient history were fought between the Greeks and the Persians

- The Greek Empire conquered the Medo-Persian Empire (**no one that could deliver the ram from his hand**) · The reign of the notable leader of the Greek Empire was suddenly cut short (**the large horn was broken**) · After the end of Alexander the Great's reign, the Greek Empire was divided among four rulers (**in place of it four notable ones came up**)

- The four rulers of the Greek Empire after Alexander ruled their own dominions, not the entire empire together (**came up toward the four winds of heaven**)

i. Alexander did not divide the empire among his four generals himself. His four leading generals divided it among themselves by force after his death.

- Cassander, ruling over Greece and its region

- Lysimachus, ruling over Asia Minor

- Seleucus, ruling over Syria and Israel's land

- Ptolemy, ruling over Egypt

c. **The male goat grew very great:** The greatness of Alexander's Empire was not only in its vast dominion, but also in its cultural power. Alexander the Great was determined to spread Greek civilization, culture, and language across every land he conquered.

i. As God guided history, He used Alexander's passion to spread Greek culture to prepare the world for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Because of Alexander's influence *koiné* (common) Greek became the common language of the civilized world - and the language of the New Testament.

4. (Dan_8:9-12) The strong horn that arises from the four horns of the male goat.

And out of one of them came a little horn which grew exceedingly great toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious *Land*. And it grew up to the host of heaven; and it cast down *some* of the host and *some* of the stars to the ground, and trampled them. He even exalted *himself* as high as the Prince of the host; and by him the daily *sacrifices* were taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down. Because of transgression, an army was given over *to the horn* to oppose the daily *sacrifices*; and he cast truth down to the ground. He did *all this* and prospered.

a. **A little horn which grew exceeding great:** This was fulfilled in one of the four successors to Alexander the Great. Since the dominion of this horn was extended **toward the south, toward the east, and toward the Glorious Land**, we can identify the historical fulfillment of this **little horn** in Antiochus IV Epiphanes who ruled over Syria and Israel's land under the Seleucid dynasty.

i. Israel's land was fought over between the dynasties of Seleucid and Ptolemy, but the Seleucids gained power over the region in the days of Antiochus III (198 B.C.).

ii. Antiochus IV gained the throne by murdering his brother, the former king Seleucus Philopator. The son of Philopator

was the rightful heir to the throne, but Antiochus IV had him held hostage in Rome. Antiochus IV legitimized his rule mainly through flattery and bribery.

iii. Antiochus IV assumed the title "*Epiphanes*" meaning, "illustrious" and alluding to deity. The Jews turned it into "*Epimanes*" meaning, "madman."

b. **The Glorious Land:** In the Hebrew, the same term is used for the land of Israel in Eze_20:6 (*the glory of all lands*), Eze_25:9 (*the glory of the country*), and in Dan_11:16 and Dan_11:41. Similar wording is used in Psa_48:2.

i. We can rightly see the **Glorious Land** as the center of the world:

- It is the *nerve center* of civilization since the days of Abraham
- It is the *truth center* from which flowed God's revelation to man
- It is the *storm center* of warring nations since the days of Joshua
- It will be the *peace center* of the earth during the millennial reign of Jesus
- It will be the *home center* for the Jewish people forever more

c. Antiochus Epiphanes is an accurate and dramatic fulfillment of this prophecy in history - so much so that critics insist that the Book of Daniel *must* have been written *after* his time.

- Antiochus Epiphanes exerted his dominion **toward the south, toward the east, and toward the** land of Israel
- Antiochus Epiphanes murdered other rulers and persecuted the people of Israel (**cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground, and trampled them**)
- Antiochus Epiphanes blasphemed God and commanded idolatrous worship directed towards himself (**exalted himself as high as the Prince of the host**)

- Antiochus Epiphanes put a stop to temple sacrifices in Jerusalem (**by him the daily sacrifices were taken away**)

- Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the temple (**the place of His sanctuary was cast down**) · Antiochus Epiphanes opposed God and seemed to prosper (**he cast truth down to the ground. He did all this and prospered**)

d. **It cast down some of the host and some of the stars to the ground:** These are symbols used in the Old Testament for angels, kings and leaders, or the people of God at large. Here it is fulfilled in Antiochus Epiphanes and his attacks against rulers and God's people in general.

i. The terms *stars of heaven* (Gen_12:3; Gen_15:5) and the *hosts of the LORD* (Exo_12:41) are used of God's people in general.

ii. "Undoubtedly it is the design here to describe the pride and ambition of [the "little horn"], and to show that he did not think anything too exalted for his aspiration." (Barnes)

e. **And trampled them:** Antiochus was an infamous persecutor of the Jewish people. He wanted them to submit to Greek culture and customs and was more than willing to use murder and violence to compel them.

i. Antiochus's suppression of the Jews came to a head in December of 168 B.C. when he returned in defeat from Alexandria. He ordered his generals to seize Jerusalem on a Sabbath. There he erected an idol of Zeus and desecrated the altar by an offering of swine and sprinkling the pig's juices in the sanctuary. Sacrifice was ceased because the temple was desecrated.

ii. 1Ma_1:29-32; 1Ma_1:52-61 describe how Antiochus persecuted the Jews. 1Ma_1:41-50 describes his blasphemies. By some estimates he is responsible for the murder of more than 100,000 Jews.

f. **Because of transgression, an army was given over to the horn to oppose the daily sacrifices:** This was fulfilled in the terrors of Antiochus Epiphanes. The Jews,

especially their leaders invited God's judgment upon them through Antiochus because of their sin.

i. The first attack of Antiochus against the Jews was to settle a rivalry for the high priesthood. A pious high priest, Onias III, was removed from office and replaced with his brother Jason because Jason bribed Antiochus. Then in 172, another brother (Menelaus) gave Antiochus an even bigger bribe and replaced Jason. A year later Menelaus started selling many of the temple's gold utensils to raise money to pay off the bribe. Onias III rebuked him, and Menelaus had him murdered. Meanwhile, Jason gathered armies and fought against Menelaus to regain the office of High Priest. Antiochus Epiphanes came in to Jerusalem in 171 to defend the man who paid him a bigger bribe to be the High Priest.

ii. "This was the reason why God set over them such a breathing devil, as was Antiochus, for a punishment of their open impiety and formal apostasy." (Trapp)

5. (Dan_8:13-14) The duration of the sanctuary's desecration: 2,300 days.

Then I heard a holy one speaking; and *another* holy one said to that certain *one* who was speaking, "How long *will* the vision *be, concerning* the daily *sacrifices* and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled under foot?" And he said to me, "For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed."

a. **Then I heard a holy one speaking:** Many think this nameless **holy one** is an Old Testament appearance of Jesus.

This is possible, but there is not enough information to be certain.

b. **How long will the vision be?** Daniel didn't ask this question; he heard the holy ones speaking together and one asked the question. They wanted to know how long the **sacrifices** would be suspended and how long the **sanctuary** would be desecrated.

c. **For two thousand three hundred days:** Literally, Daniel heard a holy one say “**two thousand three hundred** *mornings and evenings*.” Bible students debate if this means 2,300 days or 1,150 days. 2,300 days is almost seven years.

i. Either understanding is possible, but it is more likely that this means 2,300 days. The date when the temple was cleansed is well established as December 25, 165 B.C. If we count back 2,300 days from then, we come to the year when Antiochus Epiphanes began his persecution in earnest (171 B.C.).

ii. However, if we take it to mean 1,150 days it can refer to the time the temple was actually desecrated. Philip Newell makes this case: “For a duration of time during which 2300 daily sacrifices would ordinarily have been offered, one at evening and one in the morning, as specified in Exo_29:38-43. Since there are two of these daily, the actual time period involved is 1150 days, or slightly over three years. This, in fact, was the time of the Maccabean tribulation, 168-165 B.C., at the end of which the sanctuary was ‘cleansed’ by Judas Maccabeus in his restoration of the evening and morning sacrifices (2Ma_10:1-5).”

iii. This passage has been a favorite springboard for elaborate and fanciful prophetic interpretations. A popular and tragic interpretation of this passage took one year for every day, and William Miller used 2,300 “year-days” to calculate that Jesus would return in 1844 (2,300 years after Cyrus issued the decree to rebuild the temple). His movement ended up giving birth to the Seventh-Day Adventists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and several other movements.

iv. We can know that Miller and other “year-day” theories are wrong because this passage was fulfilled before the time of Jesus. Jesus recognized that the temple was properly **cleansed** and rededicated when He attended the Feast of Lights, commemorating the cleansing and rededication of

the temple after the desecration brought by Antiochus Epiphanes (Joh_10:22).

v. Adam Clarke comments show what a hold the year-date approach had to many of his time: “Though literally it be *two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings*, yet I think the *prophetic day* should be understood here, as in other parts of this prophet, and must signify so many *years*. If we date these years from the vision of the he-goat, (Alexander’s invading Asia), this was A.M. 3670, B.C. 334; and *two thousand three hundred years* from that time will reach to A.D. 1966, or *one hundred and forty-one* years from the present A.D. 1825.” There is no foundation for Clarke’s approach, and it has led many off into serious error.

d. This amazingly specific prophecy was written some 350 years before the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. Great prophetic fulfillment like this demonstrates that God not only *knows* the future, He also *guides* the future.

B. The vision is interpreted.

1. (Dan_8:15-19) Gabriel appears to Daniel.

Then it happened, when I, Daniel, had seen the vision and was seeking the meaning, that suddenly there stood before me one having the appearance of a man. And I heard a man’s voice between *the banks of* the Ulai, who called, and said, “Gabriel, make this *man* understand the vision.” So he came near where I stood, and when he came I was afraid and fell on my face; but he said to me, “Understand, son of man, that the vision *refers* to the time of the end.” Now, as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep with my face to the ground; but he touched me, and stood me upright. And he said, “Look, I am making known to you what shall happen in the latter time of the indignation; for at the appointed time the end *shall be*.”

a. **Between the banks of the Ulai:** Daniel is still in the midst of his vision, where he saw himself on the shores of the Persian river. He heard someone instruct **Gabriel** to explain the vision to Daniel.

b. **The vision refers to the time of the end:** Gabriel assures Daniel that this vision has to do with end times, with the **latter time of the indignation**.

i. This is a problem for some, because we see that the prophecy of Dan_8:1-14 was fulfilled in the days of the Medo-Persian and Greek Empires, especially in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. The terms **time of the end** and **latter time of the indignation** commonly refer to what we think of as the *end times*, not events fulfilled more than a 100 years before the birth of Jesus.

ii. The answer is that though this prophecy is fulfilled in Antiochus Epiphanes it also has a later fulfillment in the Antichrist, referring to the **time of the end**. Antiochus Epiphanes is sometimes called the “antichrist of the Old Testament.” He prefigures the Antichrist of the end times.

iii. Just like Antiochus Epiphanes rose to power with force and intrigue, so will the Antichrist. As he persecuted the Jews, so will the Antichrist. As he stopped sacrifice and desecrated the temple, so will the Antichrist. As he seemed to be a complete success, so will the Antichrist. “From what Antiochus did to Jews in his day, therefore, one may know the general pattern of what the Antichrist will do to them in the future.” (Wood)

iv. “Greece with all its refinement, culture and art, produced the Old Testament Anti-Christ while the so called Christian nations produce the New Testament Anti-Christ.” (Heslop)

c. Some see this Antiochus and Antichrist connection, and some do not. Martin Luther wrote, “This chapter in Daniel refers both to Antiochus and Antichrist.” John Calvin wrote, “Hence Luther, indulging his thoughts too freely, refers this passage to the masks of Antichrist.”

2. (Dan_8:20-22) The specific identification of the ram and the male goat of Daniel’s vision.

The ram which you saw, having the two horns; *they are* the kings of Media and Persia. And the male goat *is* the kingdom of Greece. The large horn that *is* between its eyes *is* the first

king. As for the broken *horn* and the four that stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power.

a. **The large horn that is between its eyes is the first king:** This was fulfilled in history by Alexander the Great.

b. **Four kingdoms shall arise out of that nation, but not with its power:** This was fulfilled in history by the four generals who divided Alexander's Empire between them.

3. (Dan_8:23-26) The rise and fall of the strong little horn.

And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors have reached their fullness, a king shall arise, having fierce features, who understands sinister schemes. His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; he shall destroy fearfully, and shall prosper and thrive; he shall destroy the mighty, and *also* the holy people. Through his cunning he shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule; and he shall exalt *himself* in his heart. He shall destroy many in *their* prosperity. He shall even rise against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without *human* means. And the vision of the evenings and mornings which was told is true; therefore seal up the vision, for *it refers* to many days *in the future*.

a. **In the latter time of their kingdom:** The prophecy in this passage reads equally true of both Antiochus and Antichrist. This is an example of a prophetic passage that has both a near and far fulfillment.

b. **Having fierce features:** Antiochus Epiphanes was known for his cruel brutality; this will also become the legacy of the coming Antichrist.

c. **Who understands sinister schemes . . . through his cunning:** Antiochus was known for his flattery and smooth tongue. The coming Antichrist will strike a covenant with Israel (Dan_9:27).

d. **His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power:** Antiochus Epiphanes was empowered by Satan and

allowed by God. The same will be true of the coming Antichrist.

e. **Shall prosper and thrive:** Antiochus Epiphanes looked like a total success. The coming Antichrist will look like a complete winner until God topples his reign.

f. **He shall destroy the mighty, and also the holy people:** Antiochus Epiphanes not only destroyed his enemies, but also harshly persecuted the people of God. The coming Antichrist will also destroy and persecute.

g. **He shall cause deceit to prosper:** Both the rule of Antiochus Epiphanes in the past and the Antichrist in the future are marked by **deceit**. *The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.* (2Th_2:9-10)

h. **He shall magnify himself in his heart:** The coins of Antiochus Epiphanes were inscribed with this title: *theos epiphanies* meaning, "God manifest." The coming Antichrist will also exalt himself: *So that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.* (2Th_2:4)

i. **He shall even rise against the Prince of princes:** Though Antiochus Epiphanes hated and fought against the people of God, it was because he really hated God. The same will be true of the coming Antichrist, who will hate the Jews because they hate God.

j. **Broken without human hand:** History tells us that Antiochus Epiphanes died of disease, not by the hand of man. In a similar way, no man will defeat the coming Antichrist, but the hand of Jesus will strike him down (Rev_19:20).

k. **Therefore seal up the vision:** Daniel must do this because in his day the vision referred to a period far distant in its ultimate fulfillment. For us, the time is near (Rev_1:3) and the book is unsealed (Rev_22:10).

5. (Dan_8:27) Daniel reacts to the vision with physical shock and astonishment.

And I, Daniel, fainted and was sick for days; afterward I arose and went about the king's business. I was astonished by the vision, but no one understood it.

a. **Fainted and was sick . . . I was astonished:** Daniel probably couldn't understand why God would allow such a mighty persecutor of His people to rise up.

i. "He may well have been puzzled about why Yahweh would permit even this brief time of brutal oppression under the little horn." (Archer)

b. **I went about the king's business:** Daniel didn't let either spiritual mysteries or physical weakness keep him from doing his duty. This shows us that our interest in prophecy should make us *more* about our **king's business**, not *less* about it.

i. "He would have counted it a great slur on his religious life if it could have been said that his visions and exercises interfered with his service to the king." (Meyer)

ii. "Let us not neglect the work of the Lord, though less able to perform it. A sick child's service is doubly accepted." (Trapp)

c. **No one understood it:** It wasn't because God never wanted this prophecy to be understood. There is no reason for God to reveal something to man that can never be understood. The reason why **no one understood it** was because the vision was sealed up in light of its ultimate fulfillment in Daniel's distant future.

i. It is worth repeating: the time is not distant for us in light of Rev_1:3 and the book of prophecy is not sealed in light of Rev_22:10.

(Dan 8:2) In this⁴ vision I saw myself in Susa⁵ the citadel,⁶ which is located in the province of Elam. In the vision I saw myself at the Ulai Canal.⁷

(Dan 8:3) I looked up⁸ and saw⁹ a¹⁰ ram with two horns standing at the canal. Its two horns were both long,¹¹ but

one was longer than the other. The longer one was coming up after the shorter one.

(Dan 8:4) I saw that the ram was butting westward, northward, and southward. No animal¹² was able to stand before it, and there was none who could deliver from its power.¹³ It did as it pleased and acted arrogantly.¹⁴

(Dan 8:5) While I was contemplating all this,¹⁵ a male goat¹⁶ was coming from the west over the surface of all the land¹⁷ without touching the ground. This goat had a conspicuous horn¹⁸ between its eyes.

(Dan 8:6) It came to the two-horned ram that I had seen standing beside the canal and rushed against it with raging strength.¹⁹

(Dan 8:7) I saw it approaching the ram. It went into a fit of rage against the ram²⁰ and struck it²¹ and broke off its two horns. The ram had no ability to resist it.²² The goat hurled the ram²³ to the ground and trampled it. No one could deliver the ram from its power.²⁴

(Dan 8:8) The male goat acted even more arrogantly. But no sooner had the large horn become strong than it was broken, and there arose four conspicuous horns²⁵ in its place,²⁶ extending toward the four winds of the sky.²⁷

(Dan 8:9) From one of them came a small horn.²⁸ But it grew to be very big, toward the south and the east and toward the beautiful land.²⁹

(Dan 8:10) It grew so big it reached the army³⁰ of heaven, and it brought about the fall of some of the army and some of the stars³¹ to the ground, where it trampled them.

(Dan 8:11) It also acted arrogantly against the Prince of the army,³² from whom³³ the daily sacrifice was removed and whose sanctuary³⁴ was thrown down.

(Dan 8:12) The army was given over,³⁵ along with the daily sacrifice, in the course of his sinful rebellion.³⁶ It hurled³⁷ truth³⁸ to the ground and enjoyed success.³⁹

(Dan 8:13) Then I heard a holy one⁴⁰ speaking. Another holy one said to the one who was speaking, "To what period

of time does the vision pertain — this vision concerning the daily sacrifice and the destructive act of rebellion and the giving over of both the sanctuary and army to be trampled?" (Dan 8:14) He said to me, "To 2,300 evenings and mornings;⁴¹ then the sanctuary will be put right again."⁴² (Dan 8:15) ***An Angel Interprets Daniel's Vision***

While I, Daniel, was watching the vision, I sought to understand it. Now one who appeared to be a man was standing before me.

(Dan 8:16) Then I heard a human voice coming from between the banks of the Ulai. It called out, "Gabriel,⁴³ enable this person to understand the vision."

(Dan 8:17) So he approached the place where I was standing. As he came, I felt terrified and fell flat on the ground.⁴⁴ Then he said to me, "Understand, son of man,⁴⁵ that the vision pertains to the time of the end."

(Dan 8:18) As he spoke with me, I fell into a trance with my face to the ground. But he touched me and stood me upright.⁴⁶

(Dan 8:19) Then he said, "I am going to inform you about what will happen in the latter time of wrath, for the vision⁴⁷ pertains to the appointed time of the end.

(Dan 8:20) The ram that you saw with the two horns stands for the kings of Media and Persia.

(Dan 8:21) The male goat⁴⁸ is the king of Greece,⁴⁹ and the large horn between its eyes is the first king.

(Dan 8:22) The horn that was broken⁵⁰ and in whose place there arose four others stands for four kingdoms that will arise from his nation, though they will not have his strength.

(Dan 8:23) Toward the end of their rule, when rebellious acts⁵¹ are complete, a rash⁵² and deceitful⁵³ king will arise.⁵⁴

(Dan 8:24) His power will be great, but it will not be by his strength alone. He will cause terrible destruction.⁵⁵ He will

be successful in what he undertakes.⁵⁶ He will destroy powerful people and the people of the holy ones.⁵⁷

(Dan 8:25) By his treachery⁵⁸ he will succeed through deceit.⁵⁹ He will have an arrogant attitude,⁶⁰ and he will destroy many who are unaware of his schemes.⁶¹ He will rise up against the Prince of princes, yet he will be broken apart — but not by human agency.⁶²

(Dan 8:26) The vision of the evenings and mornings that was told to you is correct.⁶³ But you should seal up the vision, for it refers to a time many days from now."

(Dan 8:27) I, Daniel, was exhausted⁶⁴ and sick for days. Then I got up and again carried out the king's business. But I was astonished at the vision, and there was no one to explain it.

(Dan 9:1) ***Daniel Prays for His People***

In the first year of Darius¹ son of Ahasuerus,² who was of Median descent and who had been³ appointed king over the Babylonian⁴ empire — (Guzik)

Dan 9:1-27

DANIEL 9 - THE SEVENTY WEEKS OF DANIEL

A. The prayer of Daniel.

1. (Dan_9:1-2) Introduction: Daniel's reason for prayer.

In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the lineage of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; in the first year of his reign I, Daniel, understood by the books the number of the years *specified* by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

a. **Understood by the books:** Daniel 9 is one of the most amazing and significant prophetic passages in the Bible, and it begins with Daniel's understanding and application of prophecy.

i. Daniel **understood** something from reading the words of God's prophets. Prophecy is meant to be **understood** -

perhaps not in every detail, but certainly in its main points.

ii. Daniel understood this **by the books** - the *specific words* recorded in *God-inspired books*. Daniel couldn't read 2Ti_3:16, but he did believe the truth of it: *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*

iii. "These verses show Daniel as a diligent student of Scripture who built his prayer life on the Word of God."

(Archer)

iv. "Oh! That you studied your Bibles more! Oh! That we all did! How we could plead the promises! How often we should prevail with God when we could hold him to his word, and say, 'Fulfill this word unto thy servant, whereon thou hast caused me to hope.' Oh! It is grand praying when our mouth is full of God's word, for there is no word that can prevail with him like his own." (Spurgeon)

b. **The number of years specified by the word of the LORD through Jeremiah:** Daniel knew that effective prayer comes out of knowing and praying both God's word and our present circumstances. His study of prophecy showed him a *specific number* - the 70 years described in Jer_25:11-13 and Jer_29:10, and his knowledge of the times led him to know those passages applied to his time.

i. *"And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. 'Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity,' says the LORD; 'and I will make it a perpetual desolation. So I will bring on that land all My words which I have pronounced against it, all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah has prophesied concerning all the nations.'"*

(Jer_25:11-13) ii. *For thus says the LORD: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place.* (Jer_29:10)

iii. It is important to note that Daniel regarded these as *real, literal years*. They were in no way understood as “symbolic” years.

iv. Daniel was undoubtedly also familiar with Isaiah’s prophecies concerning Cyrus (Isa_44:28 to Isa_45:4). He must have been encouraged to see a man named Cyrus rise in power over Persia.

c. **That He would accomplish seventy years:** If Daniel believed that God **would accomplish seventy years** of captivity, then why did he pray as passionately as he did in Daniel 9? Daniel knew that God’s promises *invite* our prayers and participation; they don’t *exclude* our prayers and participation.

i. “Nothing, therefore, can be better for us, than to ask for what he has promised.” (Calvin)

ii. This principle is repeated in many passages. 2Pe_3:12 indicates that there is a sense in which we can *hasten* the Lord’s coming by our holy conduct and godly lives; we can also hasten the Lord’s coming through evangelism

because Paul says that God’s prophetic focus on Israel will resume when the *fullness of the Gentiles has come in* (Rom_11:25). This means that we can also hasten the Lord’s coming through prayer, even as Daniel asked for a speedy fulfillment of prophecy regarding captive Israel (Daniel 9). We can also pray *Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*

(Rev_22:20) If you want Jesus to come soon, there is something you can *do* about it!

iii. But a second important reason is that Daniel asked God, in His mercy, to take the earliest of all possible starting points (Daniel’s abduction) for determining the beginning of the 70 years. There were three “waves” of captivity: · 605 B.C. - Jerusalem attacked, Daniel and other captives taken to Babylon

· 597 B.C. - Jerusalem attacked, treasure taken from the temple

· 587 B.C. - Jerusalem falls and the nation is exiled

iv. If Daniel can prevail with God in prayer, and God then takes the earliest starting point to determine the 70 years then His mercy comes to Israel 18 years earlier.

v. At the time of this prayer was still three or four years short of 70 years since 605 B.C. - it was not too soon for Daniel to begin praying.

d. **The word of the LORD through Jeremiah:** Even in God's eternal decrees, human agencies are essential. God's plan of the ages is declared, yet Jeremiah made a prophecy, Daniel made a prayer, and Cyrus made a proclamation i. "Too often our interest in the prophetic Scriptures is of a curious and speculative nature, or else we conclude that God will carry out His sovereign purpose no matter what we do, and so we do not concern ourselves with those matters." (Strauss)

ii. By tribal heritage or calling Daniel was not uniquely qualified for a ministry of intercession. He did not belong to a priestly family like Ezekiel and he wasn't a "career" prophet like Isaiah or Jeremiah. Yet like all of us, he could pray.

iii. In fact, Daniel's calling and station in life made it *less* likely that he would be such a man of prayer. He was a high government official who almost certainly had a busy schedule - yet he took time and energy to pray.

iv. "Do not, I pray you, get into the habit of neglecting the assembling of yourselves together for prayer. How often have I said, 'All our strength lies in prayer'! When we were very few, God multiplied us in answer to prayer."

2. (Dan_9:3) Daniel's preparation for prayer.

Then I set my face toward the Lord God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.

a. **I set my face:** This implies *determination* in prayer. Daniel had an objective to achieve in prayer, and he approached God as a man who would not be denied. He did this because he was rightly convinced that his prayer was in

the will of God, and knew it was not motivated by any selfish desire.

b. **To make request by prayer and supplications:** Daniel wasn't *passive* as God's prophetic plan unfolded before him. In his approach to God, he made a **request**, *asking* God to perform His promise in the way that Daniel thought would bring God most glory.

i. "We ask but little, and God gives it." (Spurgeon)

c. **With fasting, sackcloth, and ashes:** This reflected Daniel's humble heart in approaching God. **Fasting, sackcloth, and ashes** are emblems of humiliation and mourning.

i. Daniel was determined to do what ever it took to get this job done in prayer. He "left nothing undone that might possibly make his prayer more effective or more persuasive." (Walvoord)

3. (Dan_9:4-15) Daniel confesses the sin of his people, and glorifies the goodness and righteousness of God.

And I prayed to the LORD my God, and made confession, and said, "O Lord, great and awesome God, who keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him, and with those who keep His commandments, we have sinned and committed iniquity, we have done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments. Neither have we heeded Your servants the prophets, who spoke in Your name to our kings and our princes, to our fathers and all the people of the land. O Lord, righteousness *belongs* to You, but to us shame of face, as *it is* this day; to the men of Judah, to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, those near and those far off in all the countries to which You have driven them, because of the unfaithfulness which they have committed against You. O Lord, to us *belongs* shame of face, to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, because we have sinned against You. To the Lord our God *belong* mercy and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against Him. We have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our

God, to walk in His laws, which He set before us by His servants the prophets. Yes, all Israel has transgressed Your law, and has departed so as not to obey Your voice; therefore the curse and the oath written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against Him. And He has confirmed His words, which He spoke against us and against our judges who judged us, by bringing upon us a great disaster; for under the whole heaven such has never been done as what has been done to Jerusalem. As *it is* written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come upon us; yet we have not made our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities and understand Your truth.

Therefore the LORD has kept the disaster in mind, and brought it upon us; for the LORD our God *is* righteous in all the works which He does, though we have not obeyed His voice. And now, O Lord our God, who brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and made Yourself a name, as *it is* this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly!"

a. **O Lord, great and awesome God:** Daniel began his prayer where we all should - by recognizing the greatness and goodness of God. Sometimes we approach God as a stingy person who must be persuaded to give us something. But Daniel knew the problem was not with God. God **keeps His covenant and mercy with those who love Him.**

i. Daniel's prayer is remarkable for both its *understanding* and *earnestness*. Many pray with understanding but not earnestness; others are earnest but have no understanding in prayer. The two together are a powerful combination.

ii. "Oh! That our prayers could get beyond praying, till they got to agonizing." (Spurgeon)

b. **We have sinned and committed iniquity:** As Daniel confesses Israel's sin he prays as if he is as bad as the rest of Israel. This is a confession of **we**, not *they*. In this sense,

they prayers never really reach God; genuine **we** prayers see self correctly and see our fellow saints with compassion.

i. Daniel's confession of sin might seem phony until we realize how passionately and completely he is focused on God. Compared to God, even the most righteous among us falls far short.

ii. "I firmly believe that, the better a man's own character becomes, and the more joy in the Lord he has in his own heart, the more capable is he of sympathetic sorrow; and, probably, the more of it he will have. If thou hast room in thy soul for sacred joy, thou hast equal room for holy grief." (Spurgeon)

c. **Righteousness belongs to You, but to us shame of face:** Daniel knew that Israel's sin was not God's fault; God was utterly righteous and blameless. Any **shame of face** belonged to Israel, not to God.

i. It would be easy to *complain* to God about Israel's problems. Daniel didn't think for a moment that God was too hard on Israel; he knew God was completely righteous and any failure was on Israel's side.

ii. Instead of *complaining*, Daniel *confessed*. During times of great revival among God's people, the Holy Spirit always brings a deep conviction and awareness of sin. When that is responded to rightly, confession is appropriately made. J. Edwin Orr gives a good principle to govern confession: "If you sin secretly, confess secretly, admitting publicly that you need the victory but keeping details to yourself. If you sin openly confess openly to remove stumbling blocks from those whom you have hindered. If you have sinned spiritually (prayerlessness, lovelessness, and unbelief as well as their offspring, criticism, etc.) then confess to the church that you have been a hindrance."

iii. Genuine, appropriate confession will be sincere, specific, and thorough. Orr describes how in the 1952 revival in Brazil a woman in a crowded church confessed, "Please pray

for me, I need to love people more.” The leader told her gently, “That is not a confession, sister. Anyone could have said it.” Later in the service the lady stood again and said, “Please pray for me. What I should have said is that my sharp tongue has caused a lot of trouble in this congregation.” The pastor leaned over to Orr and whispered “Now she is talking!”

iv. This is praying from a low place, and very effective. Football players try to hit their opponent *low*, because they gain leverage from coming in low. Our prayers are leveraged when we come to God humble and lowly.

d. **We have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God:** Daniel does not make the slightest excuse for Israel’s sin.

The fault belongs to Israel and Israel alone. We are prone to excuses for our sin and often even make even excuses in our “confessions.”

e. **He has confirmed His words . . . As it is written in the Law of Moses:** Daniel realized that even in His judgment against Israel, God was totally faithful to His word. He promised that curses would come upon a disobedient Israel (Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28) and they did.

f. **All this disaster has come upon us; yet we have not made our prayer before the LORD our God:** As Daniel confesses his sin and the sin of Israel, he comes to the sin of *prayerlessness*. Even when they faced great trial and calamity, Israel still did not make their **prayer before the LORD**. When we sense trial or difficulty it should drive us *immediately* to prayer - when we are not so driven it should be a wake-up call to the coldness of our heart.

g. **Who brought Your people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand:** As Daniel prayed he remembered that the LORD delivered Israel from Egypt. He remembers the Old Testament “standard” of God’s power, the deliverance from Egypt. The New Testament “standard” of God’s power is the resurrection of Jesus (Eph_1:19-20).

4. (Dan_9:16-19) Daniel asks God to forgive and to restore Jerusalem.

“O Lord, according to all Your righteousness, I pray, let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem, Your holy mountain; because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Your people *are* a reproach to all *those* around us. Now therefore, our God, hear the prayer of Your servant, and his supplications, and for the Lord’s sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate. O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolations, and the city which is called by Your name; for we do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies. O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for Your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your name.”

a. **Let Your anger and Your fury be turned away from Your city Jerusalem:** After his confession of Israel’s sin and God’s great righteousness, Daniel simply asks God to mercifully turn His kind attention to Jerusalem and the temple (**cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary**) and that God would do this without delay (**do not delay for your own sake**).

i. Daniel prayed as a patriot - but a patriot more of the Kingdom of God than the Kingdom of Israel. We should pray with similar patriotism for the Kingdom of God. “Let it never be said that the Church of God has no feeling of patriotism for the Holy City, for the Heavenly Land and for her glorious King enthroned above. To us, Christian patriotism means love to the Church of God.” (Spurgeon)

ii. Daniel asks for all this **according to all Your righteousness**. It is as if Daniel prayed, “LORD, I’m not asking You to do anything against Your righteousness. I’m praying this to advance Your righteous glory.”

b. **Cause your face to shine:** This is the heart of Daniel’s plea. He knows that God’s people need so much, but all their

need can be summed up in this: *they need God's face to shine upon them.*

i. "Oh, that we might learn how to pray so that God should be the subject as well as the object of our supplications!

O God, thy Church needs thee above everything else! A poor, little, sick, neglected child needs fifty things; but you can put all those needs into one if you say that the child needs its mother. So, the Church, of God needs a thousand things, but you can put them all into one if you say, 'The Church of God needs her God.'" (Spurgeon)

c. **For the Lord's sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate . . . Do not delay for Your own sake:** Daniel's prayer is consumed with the glory of God, not primarily the benefit of man. His purpose in prayer was to see God's work accomplished and His cause glorified.

i. It isn't wrong to pray for our own needs. Jesus invited us to ask, *give us this day our daily bread.* At the same time, we need to have an even greater passion for the glory and benefit of God.

ii. We should pray with the same passion and concern for the work of God in our congregations and communities.

We can pray the prayer of Psa_85:6 : *Will You not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You?* Alone and in groups we can pray for God to pour out the Holy Spirit, to bring repentance and revival among His people, and to awaken the unconverted.

iii. This also speaks to *purity of motive* in Daniel's prayer. Sometimes we pray for God to do a great work so we can be known as great workers for God. We need to pray for the sake of the LORD's cause, both in our words and heart.

d. **We do not present our supplications before You because of our righteous deeds, but because of Your great mercies:** Here Daniel prays on firm New Testament ground. His confidence isn't in *his* goodness, but in *God's* goodness.

i. This is what it means to pray *in the name of Jesus*. Those aren't words we tack on to the end of a prayer, but they should express the fact we are praying in merits and righteousness of Jesus, not our own.

ii. Daniel was not great because he prayed. He was great because his prayer was the necessary expression of great trust and dependence on God. Many religious people spend countless hours in prayer but it achieves *nothing* because it is not rooted in the goodness and righteousness of God. *Self righteous* or *self trusting* prayer is of no power before God. "One of Satan's most subtle delusions is that he succeeds in getting hundreds of thousands of men to trust in prayer, apart from faith in the shed blood of Jesus." (Talbot)

e. **O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act!** Sometimes we talk about "wrestling in prayer" and here Daniel prays like a great wrestler. He follows up one victory with another request with rapid movement.

i. "Follow up your advantage; build another prayer or the answer that you have. If you have received a great blessing, say, 'Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him; because he has heard me once, therefore will I call again.'" (Spurgeon)

ii. "Cold prayers ask God to deny them: only importunate prayers will be replied to. When the Church of God cannot take 'No' for an answer, she shall not have 'No' for an answer. When a pleading soul must have it; when the Spirit of God works mightily in him so that he cannot let the angel go without a blessing, the angel shall not go till he has given the blessing to such a pleading one. Brethren, if there be only one among us that can pray as Daniel did, with intensity, the blessing will come." (Spurgeon)

B. Gabriel brings the answer to Daniel's prayer.

1. (Dan_9:20-21) Daniel's prayer is interrupted by an angelic visit.

Now while I *was* speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my

supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God, yes, while I *was* speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, reached me about the time of the evening offering.

a. **While I was speaking in prayer:** This dramatic answer to prayer came even as Daniel prayed. Jesus said, *your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him* (Mat_6:8). Whenever there seems to be a delay in answer to prayer, there is reason for the delay. When it is right to do it, God can answer prayer immediately.

i. Sometimes God answers prayer *before* we even pray! *It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear.* (Isa_65:24)

b. **Being caused to fly swiftly:** This is one of the few places in the Bible where we are told that angels fly. Gabriel came quickly because there is no great distance between heaven and earth.

c. **The time of the evening offering:** This was a special time, when Moses offered the Passover lamb (Exo_12:6) and when Jesus was crucified (Mat_27:45).

i. As a young man in Jerusalem, Daniel often saw the smoke rising from the temple at the time of the evening sacrifice.

2. (Dan_9:22-23) Gabriel announces that he has come to bring Daniel an answer to his prayer.

And he informed *me*, and talked with me, and said, “O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand. At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell *you*, for you *are* greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision:”

a. **I have now come forth to give you skill to understand:** In his prayer, Daniel didn’t ask for understanding. His prayer demonstrated that his heart was close to God’s heart, so God will reveal much to Daniel as His friend (Joh_15:15).

i. Daniel studied the passage in Jeremiah, but still didn't understand much. In this case, understanding came more through *prayer*. "All students of the word will tell you that when the hammers of learning and biblical criticism have failed to break open a flinty text, oftentimes prayer has done it, and nuggets of gold have been found concealed therein. To every student of the word of God who would become a well-instructed scribe we would say, with all the means which you employ, with all your searchings of the commentaries, with all your diggings into the original, with all your researches among learned divines, mingle much fervent prayer." (Spurgeon)

ii. "Luther affirmeth that he oft got more spiritual light by some one ardent prayer than ever he could do by the reading of many books, or by the most accurate meditation thereupon." (Trapp)

b. **For you are greatly beloved:** Both Daniel and the Apostle John (Joh_13:23) were noted for their love-relationship with God. Both Daniel and John were also noted for receiving amazing prophetic messages.

i. Daniel had just considered a set of "sevens" upon the nation of Israel - the 70 years of promised captivity prophesied by Jeremiah. It is as if God said through Gabriel, "I'll show you some 'sevens' that will really blow your mind."

ii. When we seek God diligently, we often receive more than we ask for.

C. The prophecy of the Seventy Weeks.

1. (Dan_9:24 a) *Seventy weeks* are determined for the Jews and Jerusalem.

Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city,

a. **Seventy weeks are determined:** There is almost universal agreement among Bible scholars and commentators that this refers to **seventy** sets of seven years, or "weeks of years."

i. In ancient Hebrew, **weeks** simply refers to a unit of seven. The Hebrew word here is often used to mean a unit of seven days, but it may also be used for a unit of seven years.

ii. “The Jews had *Sabbatic years*, by which their years were divided into weeks of years, as in this important prophecy, each week containing *seven years*.” (Clarke)

iii. Gen_29:15-28 is an example of using this ancient Hebrew word (*shabuwa*) for both “seven days” and “seven years” in the same context.

b. **For your people and for your holy city:** The seventy weeks are focused upon Daniel’s **people** (the Jews) and his **holy city** (Jerusalem).

i. Unless the church has become Israel, it is not in view here. Talbot calls the seventy weeks “God’s calendar for Israel” in that it does not focus on the Gentiles or the church.

2. (Dan_9:24 b) What will be accomplished in the seventy weeks.

To finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.

a. **To finish the transgression:** This means that transgression itself will be finished. Taken literally this means establishing an entirely new order on earth, with an end to man’s rebellion against God.

i. “The culmination of appointed years will witness the conclusion of man’s ‘transgression’ or ‘rebellion’ against God - a development most naturally entered into with the establishment of an entirely new order on earth. This seems to require nothing less than the inauguration of the kingdom of God on earth.” (Archer)

b. **To make an end of sins:** Taking these words at face value, this means not only the **end** of the guilt of sin, but an **end** of sin itself. It means to “seal up” or “restrain” sins. This looks to a new, redeemed world.

c. **To make reconciliation for iniquity:** Man's **iniquity** must be reconciled to God's justice and holiness. This work was clearly accomplished at the cross.

d. **To bring in everlasting righteousness:** One might take this in an individual sense, but there have always been righteous *individuals*. Taking the statement at face value, this means a new order of society brought in by the Messiah.

e. **To seal up vision and prophecy:** This speaks of both the ending and fulfillment of prophecy, concluding the final stage of human history and culminating with the reign of the Son of God.

i. "It must include his enthronement." (Archer)

f. **To anoint the most holy:** Taken at its simple, literal meaning, this refers to a place, not a person. There is a **most holy** place - the **most holy** place of the temple - that will be anointed and blessed.

g. Taken as a whole, Gabriel made a remarkable announcement to Daniel. He told him that each of these amazing things would happen within the period of **seventy weeks**.

i. Looking back in history, we can only say these things have each been fulfilled if we ignore their plain, literal meaning and give them a "spiritual" meaning that ignores their plain meaning. Some like to say that these promises are fulfilled generally in the spread of the gospel over the centuries, but this ignores the plain and simple meaning of these words.

3. (Dan_9:25) The course and dividing of the seventy weeks. Know therefore and understand, *that* from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, *there shall be* seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times.

a. **From the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem:** Here Gabriel reveals to Daniel the *starting point* for the seventy-weeks prophecy. There was a

command to restore and build Jerusalem in history that began this specific time period.

i. The Bible presents four possible decrees that might fulfill this description:

- Cyrus made a decree giving Ezra and the Babylonian captives the right to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple in 538 B.C. (Ezr_1:1-4 and Ezr_5:13-17)

- Darius made a decree giving Ezra the right to rebuild the temple in 517 B.C. (Ezr_6:6-12)

- Artaxerxes made a decree giving Ezra permission, safe passage, and supplies to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple in 458 B.C. (Ezr_7:11-26)

- Artaxerxes made a decree giving Nehemiah permission, safe passage and supplies to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the city and the walls in 445 B.C. (Neh_2:1-8)

ii. Only the last of these four decrees was a **command to restore and build Jerusalem**. The first three each focused on the *temple*, not on **the street** or on **the wall**.

b. **Until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks**: Gabriel's message to Daniel is simple and striking. 483 years - that is, 69 units of seven years - would pass from the time of the command recorded in Neh_2:1-8 until the appearance of **Messiah the Prince**.

i. Some say the 483 years were completed at Jesus' birth (5 or 4 B.C.). There is little chronological support for this date.

ii. Some say the 483 years were completed at His baptism, at the beginning of Jesus' ministry (if dated at 26 A.D.).

This is possible if one begins with the earlier decree of Artaxerxes, and figures with our present measurement for years instead of the ancient measurement of years (360 days).

iii. Some say the 483 years were completed at the triumphal entry of Jesus (if dated at 32 A.D.). Sir Robert Anderson's significant work *The Coming Prince* follows this argument in great detail.

- Anderson, using a 360-day year (which Israel used in Daniel's day), calculates 173,880 days from the decree to the triumphal entry, fulfilling the prophecy *to the day*. "It is customary for the Jews to have twelve months of 360 days each and then to insert a thirteenth month occasionally when necessary to correct the calendar." (Walvoord)

- The year 32 A.D. (based on Luk_3:1) for Jesus' death is controversial (most chronologists favor 30 or 33 A.D.). But recent attempts have made some case for the date: "A recent article attempts to give credence to the date of A.D. 32; cf. R.E. Showers, *Grace Journal*, XI (Winter, 1970), pp. 30ff. The evidence presented is worthy of notice." (Wood)

- "No one today is able dogmatically to declare that Sir Robert Anderson's computations are impossible." (Walvoord)

iv. Some say the 483 years were completed at the exact time of the crucifixion.

c. **Until Messiah the Prince:** Taking Anderson's calculations as reliable, we see a *remarkable* fulfillment of prophecy. A Gentile king made a decree and 483 years later *to the day*, Jesus presented Himself as **Messiah the Prince** to Israel.

i. In our mind a **Prince** is a good step lower than a *king*. In the Hebrew vocabulary, "**Prince**" has more the idea of "strong, mighty ruler" than "son of a king and heir to the throne."

ii. "There was only one occasion in our Lord's earthly ministry on which He is depicted as presenting Himself openly as Zion's King, the so-called 'Triumphal Entry,' recorded in each one of the Gospels and fulfilling Zec_9:9 and Psa_118:26." (Newell)

- On that day, Jesus *deliberately* arranged the event to present Himself as Messiah (Mar_11:1-10) · On that day,

Jesus welcomed praise (Luk_19:38-40) instead of quieting it (Luk_5:14 and Luk_8:56)

- On that day, Jesus made special reference to the importance of that day (Luk_19:41-42)

iii. This prophecy is so specifically fulfilled that it has been a significant testimony to many. "Others of the Jewish [scholars], by the evidence of these words, have been compelled to confess that Messiah is already come, and that he was that Jesus whom their forefathers crucified." (Trapp)

d. **The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times:** This indicates that the rebuilding of the streets and wall of Jerusalem would happen in the first **seven weeks** mentioned. Then would follow another 62 weeks of years until the coming of **Messiah the Prince**.

i. The seventy weeks are divided into three parts:

- Seven weeks - 49 years, until the city and its walls are rebuilt

- 69 weeks (7 plus 62), 483 years from the decree, until Messiah the Prince appears

- A final 70th week to complete the prophecy

4. (Dan_9:26) What happens after the first sixty-nine weeks. And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it *shall be* with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined.

a. **After the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off:**

The Biblical term **cut off** is sometimes used to describe execution (see Gen_9:11 and Exo_31:14). The Messiah will **be cut off** for the sake of others, **not for Himself**.

i. "Able chronologists have shown that the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ occurred immediately after the expiration of 483 prophetic years, of 360 days each, from the time of Artaxerxes' order." (Ironsides)

ii. Strangely, many able commentators simply ignore these numbers. "The numbers are symbolic and not

arithmetical.” (Baldwin)

iii. **Cut off** is a poignant description of Jesus’ earthly life up to and including the cross. “Born in another man’s stable, cradled in another man’s manger with nowhere to lay his head during his life on earth, and buried in another man’s tomb after dying on a cursed cross, the Christ of God and the Friend of the friendless was indeed cut off and had nothing.” (Heslop)

b. **Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary:** After the Messiah is **cut off**, Jerusalem and her temple would be destroyed *again* by an overwhelming army (**with a flood**). Most all Bible scholars and commentators agree that this was fulfilled in the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

c. **The people of the prince who is to come shall destroy:** The destroying army is made up of the **people of the prince who is to come**. This *coming prince* is described more in Dan_9:26.

6. (Dan_9:27) The events of the seventieth week.

Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.

a. **He shall confirm a covenant:** The “**he**” Gabriel mentions is the *prince who is to come* mentioned in the previous verse. If we know that the prince’s *people* destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D., then we know this coming prince has his ancestral roots in the soil of the ancient Roman Empire.

i. Therefore, the *prince who is to come* will in some way be an heir to the Romans, even as the final world government is an heir to the Roman Empire (Daniel 7).

b. **He shall confirm a covenant with many for one week:** The coming prince will make a **covenant** with Israel

for the final unit of seven years, completing the seventy weeks prophesied for the Jewish people and Jerusalem.

i. **Covenant with many:** The word **many** here is a *specific* reference to Israel, not a *general* reference to a group.

The ancient Hebrew says, "*covenant with the many.*"

ii. With this **covenant** Israel will embrace the Antichrist as a political messiah, if not the literal Messiah. Jesus predicted this in Joh_5:43 : *I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive.*

iii. Taking the description of what would be accomplished in the 70 Weeks from Dan_9:24, we know that the 70

Weeks are not yet complete. Yet the events promised in the first 69 weeks are fulfilled, indicated that there is a lengthy "pause" in the 70 Weeks, between the 69th week and the 70th week. The 70th week will begin when the coming prince **shall confirm a covenant** with the Jewish people. These "gaps" or "pauses" in prophecy may seem strange to us, but they are common. Comparing Isa_9:6 and Luk_1:31-33 shows another significant "pause"

or "gap" in prophecy regarding the coming of the Messiah.

iv. We can think of it in this way: God has appointed 490 years of special focus on Israel in His redemptive plan.

The years were "paused" by Israel's rejection of Jesus. Now, there is no *special* focus on Israel in God's redemptive plan because this is the time of the church. God's focus will return to Israel when the church is taken away (at the rapture) and the last seven years of man's rule on this earth begin.

v. "The 70th week will begin when the Jewish people are restored in unbelief to their land and city; and among them will be found a faithful remnant, owning their sin, and seeking Jehovah's face." (Henry Ironside writing in 1911)

c. **In the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering:** The coming prince will break the

covenant with Israel in the **middle** of the seven years, the final “week.”

i. The Book of Revelation sees this seven year period with both its halves as yet future (Rev_12:6; Rev_12:13-14; Rev_13:5-9; Rev_13:14-15). The **middle of the week** and the **end of sacrifice** had not yet happened in 90 A.D.

d. **On the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate**: The ending of sacrifice will come with **abominations**, followed by tremendous *desolation*.

i. **Abominations** translates an ancient Hebrew word (*shiqquwts*) that is connected to horrific idolatry (Deu_29:17, 1Ki_11:5-7, 2Ki_23:13). The idea is that the coming prince breaks the covenant and brings an end to sacrifice and offering by desecrating the holy place of the temple with a horrific idolatry.

ii. Jesus called this the *abomination of desolation* (Mat_24:15) and indicated that it would be a pivotal sign in the Great Tribulation. Paul referred to the idolatry of the coming prince in 2Th_2:3-4.

e. **Until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate**: This breaking of the covenant and abomination of desolation has a promised **consummation**. Before the 70th week is completed, each of the things described in Dan_9:24 will be accomplished and everlasting righteousness will reign.

THE SEVENTY WEEKS OF DANIEL AS UNDERSTOOD BY SIR ROBERT ANDERSON IN THE COMING PRINCE

Dan_9:24-25 says that from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem to the coming of the Messiah there will be 483 years.

$7 + 62 \text{ “weeks”} = 69 \text{ groups of seven years. } 7 \times 69 = 483 \text{ years}$

Anderson sees a prophetic year as 360 days. This is based both on ancient history and on Rev_11:2; Rev_13:5; Rev_11:3; Rev_12:6 which indicate that 42 months $3 \frac{1}{2}$ years are equal to 1,260 days.

Therefore, $483 \text{ years} \times 360 \text{ days} = 173,880 \text{ days}$

Artaxerxes started his reign in 465 B.C. The decree to rebuild Jerusalem was given on the first day of Nisan, in the 20th year of Artaxerxes. In our calendar system (the Julian calendar) that date is March 14, 445 B.C. (Neh_2:1) Jesus started His ministry in the 15th year of Tiberius (see Luk_3:1). Tiberius started his reign in 14 A.D., so Jesus' ministry started in 29

A.D. Anderson believes that Jesus celebrated four Passovers during His ministry, one each in 29, 30, 31 and His final Passover in 32.

With the help of lunar charts, we can calculate the exact date of ancient Passovers, so it is possible to calculate the exact day of Jesus'

triumphal entry into Jerusalem as April 6, 32 A.D.

From 445 B.C. to 32 A.D. there are 476 years on the Julian calendar

(not 477 years, because there is no year zero)

$476 \text{ years} \times 365 \text{ days} = 173,740 \text{ days}$

Adjusting for the difference between March 14 and April 6 adds 24 days

Adjusting for leap years over a period of 476 years adds 116 days

The total number of days from March 14, 445 B.C. to April 6, 32 A.D.

$173,740 + 24 + 116 = 173,880 \text{ days}$

According to his calendar, Daniel told us there would be 173,880 days between the decree and the arrival of Messiah the Prince.

Jesus said to the Jews of this day: *If you had known, even you, especially IN THIS YOUR DAY, the things that make for your peace!*

(Luk_19:42) David said of this day in Psa_118:24 : *THIS IS THE DAY which the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.*

(Dan 9:2) in the first year of his reign⁵ I, Daniel, came to understand from the sacred books⁶ that, according to the

word of the LORD⁷

disclosed to the prophet Jeremiah, the years for the fulfilling of the desolation of Jerusalem⁸ were seventy in number.

(Dan 9:3) So I turned my attention⁹ to the Lord God¹⁰ to implore him by prayer and requests, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes.¹¹

(Dan 9:4) I prayed to the LORD my God, confessing in this way:

"O Lord,¹² great and awesome God who is faithful to his covenant¹³ with those who love him and keep his commandments, (Dan 9:5) we have sinned! We have done what is wrong and wicked; we have rebelled by turning away from your commandments and standards.

(Dan 9:6) We have not paid attention to your servants the prophets, who spoke by your authority¹⁴ to our kings, our leaders, and our ancestors,¹⁵ and to all the inhabitants¹⁶ of the land as well.

(Dan 9:7) "You are righteous,¹⁷ O Lord, but we are humiliated this day¹⁸ — the people¹⁹ of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far away in all the countries in which you have scattered them, because they have behaved unfaithfully toward you.

(Dan 9:8) O LORD, we have been humiliated²⁰ — our kings, our leaders, and our ancestors — because we have sinned against you.

(Dan 9:9) Yet the Lord our God is compassionate and forgiving,²¹ even though we have rebelled against him.

(Dan 9:10) We have not obeyed²² the LORD our God by living according to²³ his laws²⁴ that he set before us through his servants the prophets.

(Dan 9:11) "All Israel has broken²⁵ your law and turned away by not obeying you.²⁶ Therefore you have poured out

on us the judgment solemnly threatened²⁷ in the law of Moses the servant of God, for we have sinned against you.²⁸ (Dan 9:12) He has carried out his threats²⁹ against us and our rulers³⁰ who were over³¹ us by bringing great calamity on us — what has happened to Jerusalem has never been equaled under all heaven!

(Dan 9:13) Just as it is written in the law of Moses, so all this calamity has come on us. Still we have not tried to pacify³² the LORD our God by turning back from our sin and by seeking wisdom³³ from your reliable moral standards.³⁴

(Dan 9:14) The LORD was mindful of the calamity, and he brought it on us. For the LORD our God is just³⁵ in all he has done,³⁶ and we have not obeyed him.³⁷

(Dan 9:15) "Now, O Lord our God, who brought your people out of the land of Egypt with great power³⁸ and made a name for yourself that is remembered to this day — we have sinned and behaved wickedly.

(Dan 9:16) O Lord, according to all your justice,³⁹ please turn your raging anger⁴⁰ away from your city Jerusalem, your holy mountain.

For due to our sins and the iniquities of our ancestors, Jerusalem and your people are mocked by all our neighbors.

(Dan 9:17) "So now, our God, accept⁴¹ the prayer and requests of your servant, and show favor to⁴² your devastated sanctuary for your own sake.⁴³

(Dan 9:18) Listen attentively,⁴⁴ my God, and hear! Open your eyes and look on our desolated ruins⁴⁵ and the city called by your name.⁴⁶ For it is not because of our own righteous deeds that we are praying to you,⁴⁷ but because your compassion is abundant.

(Dan 9:19) O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, pay attention, and act! Don't delay, for your own sake, O my God! For your city and your people are called by your name."⁴⁸

(Dan 9:20) ***Gabriel Gives to Daniel a Prophecy of Seventy Weeks***

While I was still speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and presenting my request before the LORD my God concerning his holy mountain⁴⁹ — (Dan 9:21) yes, while I was still praying,⁵⁰ the man Gabriel, whom I had seen previously⁵¹ in a vision, was approaching me in my state of extreme weariness,⁵² around the time of the evening offering.

(Dan 9:22) He spoke with me, instructing me as follows:⁵³ "Daniel, I have now come to impart understanding to you.

(Dan 9:23) At the beginning of your requests a message went out, and I have come to convey it to you, for you are of great value in God's sight.⁵⁴ Therefore consider the message and understand the vision:⁵⁵

(Dan 9:24) "Seventy weeks⁵⁶ have been determined

concerning your people and your holy city

to put an end to⁵⁷ rebellion,

to bring sin⁵⁸ to completion,⁵⁹

to atone for iniquity,

to bring in perpetual⁶⁰ righteousness,

to seal up⁶¹ the prophetic vision,⁶²

and to anoint a most holy place.⁶³

(Dan 9:25) So know and understand:

From the issuing of the command⁶⁴ to restore and rebuild

Jerusalem⁶⁵ until an anointed one, a prince arrives,⁶⁶
there will be a period of seven weeks⁶⁷ and sixty-two weeks.

It will again be built,⁶⁸ with plaza and moat,

but in distressful times.

(Dan 9:26) Now after the sixty-two weeks,

an anointed one will be cut off and have nothing.⁶⁹

As for the city and the sanctuary,

the people of the coming prince will destroy⁷⁰ them.

But his end will come speedily⁷¹ like a flood.⁷²

Until the end of the war that has been decreed

there will be destruction.

(Dan 9:27) He will confirm a covenant with many for one week.⁷³

But in the middle of that week

he will bring sacrifices and offerings to a halt.

On the wing⁷⁴ of abominations will come⁷⁵ one who destroys,

until the decreed end is poured out on the one who destroys."

(Dan 10:1) ***An Angel Appears to Daniel***

1 In the third² year of King Cyrus of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel (who was also called Belteshazzar). This message was true and concerned a great war.³ He understood the message and gained insight by the vision.

(Guzik)

Dan 10:1-11:1

DANIEL 10 - CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE FINAL VISION

A. Daniel's vision of the mysterious man.

1. (Dan_10:1-3) Introduction: Daniel's state of heart.

In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia a message was revealed to Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar. The message *was* true, but the appointed time *was* long; and he understood the message, and had understanding of the vision. In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.

a. **In the third year of Cyrus:** By this time, the first wave of exiles had returned under the leadership of Ezra (Ezra 1-2).

b. **The message was true, but the appointed time was long:** Daniel 10 sets the stage for the spectacular prophecy (**message**) of Daniel 11, which describes a time of great persecution and testing for the people of Israel.

i. Walvoord on **the appointed time was long:** "The implication is that the period in view is a long and strenuous one involving great conflict and trouble for the people of God."

c. **Mourning three full weeks:** Why was Daniel in mourning? Some think it was because so few Jews had returned with Ezra from exile. Others believe it was because Ezra faced severe opposition in rebuilding the temple.

i. Daniel did not go back with Ezra's group of exiles because he was about 84 years old at this time. Daniel could serve the exiles better from his high position in government than he could with them in Jerusalem.

ii. "I think too that Daniel's sorrow was occasioned partly by the repetition of those words to him: 'The vision is true, but the time appointed is long.'" (Spurgeon)

d. **I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth:** It would be wrong to call what Daniel did "fasting." The Biblical idea of fasting is to abstain from food altogether. Daniel definitely practiced a form of self-denial, but it was not fasting.

2. (Dan_10:4-6) Daniel sees a glorious man on the banks of the Tigris River.

Now on the twenty-fourth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, that *is*, the Tigris, I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose waist *was* girded with gold of Uphaz! His body *was* like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in color, and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude.

a. **A certain man clothed in linen:** Commentators divide over the identity of this **certain man**. Some say this is Jesus, noting that the description is remarkably like what John saw in Rev_1:12-16.

Dan_10:4-6

Rev_1:12-16

Clothed in linen

Clothed with a garment

Waist girded with gold

Girded about the chest with a golden band

Body was like beryl

Face like . . . lightning

Head and hair were white like wool

Eyes like torches of fire

Eyes like a flame of fire

Feet like burnished bronze

Feet were like fine brass

Sound of his words like the

Voice as the sound of many waters

voice of a multitude

b. Others say the **certain man** is an unnamed angel of high rank, noting that Jesus would not need the assistance of Michael, mentioned in Dan_10:13.

i. We also know that Ezekiel saw angelic figures **clothed in linen** (Eze_9:2).

3. (Dan_10:7) Daniel's companions are terrified, yet unseeing.

And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision, for the men who were with me did not see the vision; but a great terror fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves.

a. **I, Daniel, alone saw the vision:** This shows that there was something supernatural about this vision. Daniel saw what he saw regarding the glorious man, but his companions could not see it.

i. This is like the latter instance of Saul on the road to Damascus, when his companions could not hear the same voice from heaven that he heard. These cases remind us that we can be close to the presence and power of God, yet miss the message through lack of spiritual perception.

b. **The fled to hide themselves:** Of course they couldn't see the vision if they were hiding from it.

4. (Dan_10:8-9) Daniel's reaction to the sight of the man.

Therefore I was left alone when I saw this great vision, and no strength remained in me; for my vigor was turned to frailty in me, and I retained no strength. Yet I heard the sound of his words; and while I heard the sound of his words I was in a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.

a. **No strength remained in me:** As godly as Daniel was, he was “undone” by this vision of the glorious man. Daniel’s experience shows us that even the holiest of men fall short before God and even His closest associates.

b. **My vigor turned to frailty:** Wood says of this word **frailty**, “The word suggests a death-like paleness, combined with a grotesque wrenching of facial features.”

i. “To judge by the description, the trance experienced was not one to envy.” (Baldwin)

B. The message to Daniel.

1. (Dan_10:10-11) The “certain man” introduces himself to Daniel.

Suddenly, a hand touched me, which made me tremble on my knees and *on* the palms of my hands. And he said to me, “O Daniel, man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you.” While he was speaking this word to me, I stood trembling.

a. **A hand touched me:** As Daniel was laid out in weakness by this experience, he was strengthened by the touch of **a hand**.

b. **O Daniel, man greatly beloved:** This is the second time Daniel is called **greatly beloved** (Dan_9:23 previous to this). Each time it is in relation to Daniel’s being favored with a great and significant revelation of the future.

i. “It did not do Daniel any harm to know that he was greatly beloved of God; or else he would not have received that information from heaven. Some people are always afraid that, if Christian people obtain full assurance, and receive a sweet sense of divine love, they will grow proud, and be carried away with conceit. Do not you have any such fear for other people, and especially do not be afraid of it for yourselves. I know of no greater blessing that can happen to any man and woman here, than to be assured by the Spirit of God that they are greatly beloved of the Lord.” (Spurgeon)

c. **Stand upright:** When it was time for Daniel to hear and understand, he needed to **stand** at attention.

2. (Dan_10:12-14) The angel explains his coming to Daniel, and the opposition he faced on the way.

Then he said to me, "Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia. Now I have come to make you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision *refers* to *many* days yet *to come*."

a. **From the first day . . . your words were heard:** God responded to Daniel's prayer the very moment he made his request known. Daniel had been in great and serious prayer for *three full weeks* (Dan_10:2).

b. **I have come because of your words:** We can't pass this over lightly. *An angel was dispatched because of Daniel's prayer.* This is another of many reminders in the Book of Daniel that prayer matters. It isn't merely a therapeutic exercise for the one who prays.

c. **The prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me:** Since this **prince** is able to oppose the angelic messenger to Daniel, we know this is more than a man. This **prince** is some kind of angelic being, and we know he is an evil angelic being because he opposed the word of God coming to Daniel and stood against the angelic messenger.

i. The word **prince** has the idea of a ruler or authority. This fits in well with the New Testament idea that angelic ranks - including demonic forces - are organized and have a hierarchy (Eph_1:21, Eph_6:12, Col_1:16, Col_2:15).

ii. Apparently, this was a demon of high rank that opposed the answer to prayer. On three occasions, Jesus referred to

Satan as *the prince of this world* (Joh_12:31; Joh_14:30, and Joh_16:11).

d. **Withstood me twenty-one days:** Since the angel was dispatched immediately and Daniel's period of prayer and self-denial was 21 days (the *three full weeks* of Dan_10:2), we see that the answer to the prayer was delayed by **the prince of the kingdom of Persia**.

i. The correlation between Daniel's time of self-denial and prayer and the duration of the battle between the angels and the **prince of the kingdom of Persia** establishes a link between Daniel's prayer and the angelic victory.

Since the angelic victory came on the 21st day, we can surmise that if Daniel would have stopped praying on the 20th day the answer may not have come.

ii. "There may be hindering factors of which a praying Christian knows nothing as he wonders why the answers to his requests are delayed. Nevertheless, he is to keep on praying. It may be that he will not receive an answer because he has given up on the twentieth day when he should have persisted to the twenty-first day." (Archer) e.

Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me: In other passages **Michael** is associated with the battle between good angels and evil angels (Revelation 12, Jud_1:9).

i. **Came to help me:** This phrase may be the most compelling reason to think that this "**me**" is not Jesus, despite the remarkable similarity between the *certain man* of Daniel 10 and the vision of Jesus in Revelation 1. Though Jesus received angelic assistance as an incarnate man (Mar_1:13, Luk_22:43), it is difficult to think of Him needing or receiving angelic help before the incarnation.

f. **Now I have come:** Why did God allow such a conflict? He certainly *could have* blasted away in a moment any demonic opposition. God's plan probably was to use the time of delay to develop Daniel as a man of persistent prayer.

- i. Persistence in prayer is not necessary because God's reluctance needs to be overcome. It is necessary to train us.
- ii. Daniel's success makes us reflect on our failures. How much angelic assistance or insight has never been realized, or greatly delayed, because of a lack of persistence in prayer?

g. **What will happen to your people in the latter days:** The vision of Daniel 11, 12 is focused on the **latter days**, though it also relates to the closer time of Antiochus Epiphanes.

3. (Dan_10:15-19) Daniel is strengthened in his weakness.

When he had spoken such words to me, I turned my face toward the ground and became speechless. And suddenly, *one* having the likeness of the sons of men touched my lips; then I opened my mouth and spoke, saying to him who stood before me, "My lord, because of the vision my sorrows have overwhelmed me, and I have retained no strength. For how can this servant of my lord talk with you, my lord? As for me, no strength remains in me now, nor is any breath left in me." Then again, *the one* having the likeness of a man touched me and strengthened me. And he said, "O man greatly beloved, fear not! Peace *be* to you; be strong, yes, be strong!" So when he spoke to me I was strengthened, and said, "Let my lord speak, for you have strengthened me."

a. **I turned my face toward the ground and became speechless:** Daniel started on the ground (Dan_10:9), then stood up (Dan_10:11), and now is back on his **face** again.

b. **Because the vision my sorrows have overwhelmed me:** The ancient Hebrew word translated **sorrows** has the thought of twisting or writhing pain. It is used several places for labor pains in childbirth. Daniel is so severely affected by this vision that he can barely breathe, much less deal with prophetic complexities.

c. **One having the likeness of a man touched me and strengthened me:** This was not God, but an angel. God touched Daniel through an intermediary.

i. It is the touch of God that brings strength. Daniel was touched by God, and received strength. But “Many churches today are marked by a well-organized, heavily staffed, and adequately financed impotency.” (Strauss) 4. (Dan_10:20 to Dan_11:1) The angel introduces his message to Daniel.

Then he said, “Do you know why I have come to you? And now I must return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I have gone forth, indeed the prince of Greece will come. But I will tell you what is noted in the Scripture of Truth. (No one upholds me against these, except Michael your prince. Also in the first year of Darius the Mede, I, *even* I, stood up to confirm and strengthen him).”

a. **I must return to fight with the prince of Persia:** Daniel was about to receive the answer to his prayer, but the battle was not over for his heavenly messenger. First he must battle **the prince of Persia**, then **the prince of Greece**.

God is watching out for Israel, working behind the scenes in the spiritual realm.

i. “The heavenly warfare is to be directed against first Persia and then Greece, because each of these in turn will have power over God’s people.” (Baldwin)

b. **No one upholds me against these, except Michael your prince:** Michael seems to be an angelic guardian of Israel, battling against the demonic representative of Persia or any other who opposes God’s people. On earth, Israel seemed lowly and weak but in the heavens Israel had the mightiest representative of all.

(Dan 10:2) In those days I, Daniel, was mourning for three whole weeks.⁴

(Dan 10:3) I ate no choice food; no meat or wine came to my lips,⁵ nor did I anoint myself with oil⁶ until the end of those three weeks.

(Dan 10:4) On the twenty-fourth day of the first month⁷ I was beside the great river, the Tigris.⁸

(Dan 10:5) I looked up⁹ and saw a¹⁰ man¹¹ clothed in linen;¹² around his waist was a belt made of gold from Upaz.¹³

(Dan 10:6) His body resembled yellow jasper,¹⁴ and his face had an appearance like lightning. His eyes were like blazing torches;¹⁵ his arms and feet had the gleam of polished bronze. His voice¹⁶ thundered forth like the sound of a large crowd.

(Dan 10:7) Only I, Daniel, saw the vision; the men who were with me did not see it.¹⁷ On the contrary, they were overcome with fright¹⁸ and ran away to hide.

(Dan 10:8) I alone was left to see this great vision. My strength drained from¹⁹ me, and my vigor disappeared;²⁰ I was without energy.²¹

(Dan 10:9) I listened to his voice,²² and as I did so²³ I fell into a trance-like sleep with my face to the ground.

(Dan 10:10) Then²⁴ a hand touched me and set me on my hands and knees.²⁵

(Dan 10:11) He said to me, "Daniel, you are of great value.²⁶ Understand the words that I am about to²⁷ speak to you. So stand up,²⁸ for I have now been sent to you." When he said this²⁹ to me, I stood up shaking.

(Dan 10:12) Then he said to me, "Don't be afraid, Daniel, for from the very first day you applied your mind³⁰ to understand and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard. I have come in response to your words.

(Dan 10:13) However, the prince of the kingdom of Persia was opposing me for twenty-one days. But³¹ Michael, one of the leading princes, came to help me, because I was left there³² with the kings of Persia.

(Dan 10:14) Now I have come to help you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to future days."

(Dan 10:15) While he was saying this to me,³³ I was flat on³⁴ the ground and unable to speak.

(Dan 10:16) Then³⁵ one who appeared to be a human being³⁶ was touching my lips. I opened my mouth and started to speak, saying to the one who was standing before me, "Sir,³⁷ due to the vision, anxiety has gripped me and I have no strength.

(Dan 10:17) How, sir, am I able to speak with you?³⁸ My strength is gone,³⁹ and I am breathless."

(Dan 10:18) Then the one who appeared to be a human being touched me again⁴⁰ and strengthened me.

(Dan 10:19) He said to me, "Don't be afraid, you who are valued.⁴¹ Peace be to you! Be strong! Be really strong!" When he spoke to me, I was strengthened. I said, "Sir, you may speak now,⁴² for you have given me strength."

(Dan 10:20) He said, "Do you know why I have come to you?⁴³ Now I am about to return to engage in battle with the prince of Persia.

When I go, the prince of Greece is coming.

(Dan 10:21) However, I will first tell you what is written in a dependable book.⁴⁴ (There is no one who strengthens me against these princes,⁴⁵ except Michael your⁴⁶ prince.

(Dan 11:1) And in the first year of Darius the Mede, I¹ stood to strengthen him and to provide protection for him.) (Dan 11:2) Now I will tell you the truth.

The Angel Gives a Message to Daniel

"Three² more kings will arise for Persia. Then a fourth³ king will be unusually rich,⁴ more so than all who preceded him. When he has amassed power through his riches, he will stir up everyone against⁵ the kingdom of Greece.

(Guzik)

Dan 11:2-45

DANIEL 11 - ANTIOCHUS AND ANTICHRIST REVISITED

Introduction

1. This chapter contains one of the most specifically fulfilled prophecies of the Bible, predicting history over some 375 years, and to the end, with amazing accuracy.

2. The chapter is so specific, that many critics who deny supernatural revelation, have insisted that it is *history*, written after the fact, fraudulently claiming to be prophecy.

a. Because of the detail of the prophecy, we will be forced to frequently summarize; and the fulfillment of the prophecy will be observed as it is described.

3. Commentator Joyce Baldwin explains the mindset of late-daters:

a. "Though all of this is presented as if it were future, the considered opinion of most scholars is that the writer was using an accepted literary form, which would have deceived no-one. The intention would be to show that the course of history was under God's direction, and so achieving His purposes . . . When the history becomes prophecy the transition can be detected, because events proved him wrong."

b. Such a view *must* undermine confidence in the entire book. If the late dating theory is correct, then "the so-called revelation was in fact nothing of the sort . . . it follows that the preparation for the vision in chapter 10 was also a fiction put in as local colour for the sake of effect."

A. The division of the Greek Empire.

1. (Dan_11:2) Four future kings.

And now I will tell you the truth: Behold, three more kings will arise in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than *them* all; by his strength, through his riches, he shall stir up all against the realm of Greece.

a. **Three more kings will arise in Persia:** Simply, the angel tells Daniel that there will be three more kings **in**

Persia until a fourth arises. The **fourth** king will be strong, rich, and oppose **the realm of Greece**. This strong, rich **fourth** king was fulfilled in the Persian King Xerxes.

b. In fulfillment, there were actually four kings from the time Daniel speaks of until Xerxes, the one who did **stir up all against the realm of Greece**. Either the angel omitted the current king (Cyrus), looking only to the future or he ignored King Smerdis of Persia (522-21 B.C.) because he ruled less than one year and was an imposter to the throne.

c. These visions and insights regarding the future of the Persian and Greek Empires were relevant because at some time, each empire attempted to wipe out the people of God.

i. The Persian Empire tried to wipe out the Jewish people during the reign of Xerxes, through the plot of Haman (as shown in the Book of Esther).

ii. The Greek Empire tried to wipe out the Jewish people during the reign of Antiochus IV, when he attempted to kill every Jew who did not renounce their commitment to God and embrace Greek culture.

2. (Dan_11:3-4) The rise of a mighty king.

Then a mighty king shall arise, who shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. And when he has arisen, his kingdom shall be broken up and divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not among his posterity nor according to his dominion with which he ruled; for his kingdom shall be uprooted, even for others besides these.

a. **Then a mighty king shall arise:** The angel told Daniel of a mighty king with a **great dominion** - but his kingdom would not endure, and it would be divided after the death of the **mighty king**.

b. **Shall rule with great dominion and do according to his will:** This is fulfilled in Alexander the Great, who certainly was **a mighty king**. Alexander died at 32 years of age of a fever after a drunken party in Babylon.

c. **Not among his posterity:** Afterward Alexander's death, none of his descendants succeeded him. It wasn't for lack of

trying. Alexander did leave three possible heirs: a half brother named Philip, who was mentally deficient; a son who was born after Alexander died; and an illegitimate son named Hercules. The half-brother and the posthumous son were first designated co-monarchs, each with a regent. But fighting amongst the regents eventually resulted in the murder of all possible heirs.

d. **Divided towards the four winds of heaven:** After the death of all Alexander's possible heirs, four generals controlled the Greek Empire, but none of them **according to his** (Alexander's) **dominion**.

i. The rest of this prophecy focuses on two of the four inheritors of Alexander's realm, and the dynasties they established. Only two are focused on because they constantly fought over the Promised Land, because it sat between their centers of power.

B. The kings of the North and the kings of the South.

1. (Dan_11:5) The strength of the king of the South.

Also the king of the South shall become strong, as well as *one* of his princes; and he shall gain power over him and have dominion.

His dominion *shall be* a great dominion.

a. **The king of the South shall become strong:** One of the four inheritors of the empire of the *mighty king* will become stronger and greater than the others.

b. This was fulfilled in Ptolemy I of Egypt, who exerted his control over the Holy Land. Soon after the division of Alexander's Empire, the Ptolemies dominated this region.

i. Ptolemy I had a prince named Seleucus, who rose to power and took dominion over the region of Syria. He became more powerful than his former Egyptian ruler. The Seleucids are identified with the *Kings of the North*, and the Ptolemies were the *Kings of the South*.

ii. The dynasties of the Seleucids and the Ptolemies fought for some 130 years. The stronger of the two always held dominion over the Holy Land.

2. (Dan_11:6) A marriage between the families of the kings of the North and the kings of the South.

And at the end of *some* years they shall join forces, for the daughter of the king of the South shall go to the king of the North to make an agreement; but she shall not retain the power of her authority, and neither he nor his authority shall stand; but she shall be given up, with those who brought her, and with him who begot her, and with him who strengthened her in *those* times.

a. **They shall join forces:** Joined by a marriage, the kings of the North and South will be allies for a while, but the arrangement will not last.

b. This was fulfilled in the marriage between Antiochus II (of the Seleucids) and Berenice (daughter of Ptolemy II). There was peace for a time because of this marriage, but it was upset when Ptolemy II died.

i. **Shall not retain the power of her authority:** Once Ptolemy II died, Antiochus II put away Berenice and took back his former wife, Laodice.

ii. **Neither he nor his authority shall stand:** Laodice didn't trust her husband Antiochus II; so she had him poisoned.

iii. **She shall be given up, with those who brought her:** After the murder of Antiochus II, Laodice had Berenice, her attendants, and an infant son of Antiochus II and Berenice killed.

iv. After this reign of terror, Laodice set her son (Seleucus II) on the throne of the Syrian dominion.

3. (Dan_11:7-9) From the South, an army defeats the kingdom of the North.

But from a branch of her roots *one* shall arise in his place, who shall come with an army, enter the fortress of the king of the North, and deal with them and prevail. And he shall also carry their gods captive to Egypt, with their princes *and* their precious articles of silver and gold; and he shall continue *more* years than the king of the North. Also *the*

king of the North shall come to the kingdom of the king of the South, but shall return to his own land.

a. **Who shall come with an army:** The angel told Daniel that a **branch of her roots** will come from the South and **prevail** over the kings of the North.

b. This was fulfilled in the person of Ptolemy III. He was the sister of Berenice (the **branch of her roots**). Avenging the murder of his sister, Ptolemy III invaded Syria and humbled Seleucus II.

i. **He shall continue more years than the king of the North:** Ptolemy III lived four years past Seleucus II.

4. (Dan_11:10) The sons of the king of the North and their victory.

However his sons shall stir up strife, and assemble a multitude of great forces; and *one* shall certainly come and overwhelm and pass through; then he shall return to his fortress and stir up strife.

a. **His sons shall stir up strife:** The sons of the kings of the North will continue the battle. One of the sons will conquer the Holy Land (**overwhelm and pass through**) which stood as a buffer between the kings of the South and the kings of the North.

b. This was fulfilled in Seleucus III and Antiochus III, the two sons of Seleucus II. Both were successful generals, but Seleucus III ruled only a short time and was succeeded by his brother.

i. In a furious battle, Antiochus III took back the Holy Land from the dominion of the Ptolemies.

5. (Dan_11:11-12) The king of the South gains an upper hand over the king of the North.

And the king of the South shall be moved with rage, and go out and fight with him, with the king of the North, who shall muster a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into the hand of his *enemy*. When he has taken away the multitude, his heart will be lifted up; and he will cast down tens of thousands, but he will not prevail.

a. **The king of the South shall be moved with rage:**

The angel tells Daniel that the king of the South will attack and meet a **great multitude** of soldiers from the king of the North. The king of the North will lose in battle and his **multitude** will be defeated.

b. This was fulfilled when Antiochus III was defeated at the battle of Raphia. Because of that loss he was forced to give back dominion over the Holy Land to Ptolemy IV.

6. (Dan_11:13-16) The king of the North and his occupation of the **Glorious Land**.

For the king of the North will return and muster a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come at the end of some years with a great army and much equipment. Now in those times many shall rise up against the king of the South. Also, violent men of your people shall exalt themselves in fulfillment of the vision, but they shall fall. So the king of the North shall come and build a siege mound, and take a fortified city; and the forces of the South shall not withstand *him*. Even his choice troops *shall have* no strength to resist. But he who comes against him shall do according to his own will, and no one shall stand against him.

He shall stand in the Glorious Land with destruction in his power.

a. **The king of the North . . . shall certainly come at the end of some years with a great army:** The angel told Daniel that the northern dynasty would answer back and defeat the king of the South in an extended siege. This victory will give the king of the North dominion over **the Glorious Land**.

i. "The land of ornaments - that is, Judea, which, lying betwixt these two potent princes, was perpetually afflicted, as corn is ground asunder lying betwixt two heavy millstones." (Trapp)

b. This was fulfilled when Antiochus III invaded Egypt again, gaining final control over the armies of Ptolemy V and over the Holy Land.

i. **Many shall rise up against the king of the South:** Jews living in the Holy Land helped Antiochus III defeat the **king of the South**. This was because the Jewish people resented the rule of the Egyptian Ptolemies (**violent men of your people shall exalt themselves in fulfillment of the vision**).

ii. **He who comes against him shall do according to his own will . . . with destruction in his power:** The Jewish people of **the Glorious Land** initially welcomed Antiochus III as a liberator from Egyptian rule. Their decision to support Antiochus III proved unwise when he turned **destruction** upon the **Glorious Land** and its people.

7. (Dan_11:17) The king of the South will give his daughter to the king of the North.

He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him; thus shall he do. And he shall give him the daughter of women to destroy it; but she shall not stand *with him*, or be for him.

a. **He shall also set his face:** The king of the North who ruled over the Holy Land would also attempt to dominate and destroy the king of the South. He would make one attempt by giving the king of the South **the daughter of women to destroy**, but this plot would not succeed.

b. This was fulfilled when Antiochus III gave his daughter Cleopatra to Ptolemy V of Egypt. He did this hoping to gain permanent influence and eventually control in Egypt. To the great disappointment of Antiochus III, the plan did not succeed because Cleopatra wasn't faithful to her Egyptian husband at all.

i. This was not the Cleopatra most famous from ancient history, but this was the ancestor of the more famous Cleopatra. The more famous Egyptian woman lived some 100 years after the time of this Cleopatra.

8. (Dan_11:18-19) The king of the North is stopped and stumbles.

After this he shall turn his face to the coastlands, and shall take many. But a ruler shall bring the reproach against them to an end; and with the reproach removed, he shall turn back on him. Then he shall turn his face toward the fortress of his own land; but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found.

a. **He shall turn back on him:** After the disappointing effort through the daughter, the king of the North will turn his efforts towards **the coastlands** - until he is stopped by one formerly under **reproach**, until **he shall stumble and fall, and not be found**.

b. This was fulfilled when Antiochus III turned his attention towards the areas of Asia Minor and Greece. He was helped by Hannibal, the famous general from Carthage. But a Roman General, Lucius Cornelius Scipio, defeated Antiochus in Greece. Antiochus planned to humiliate Greece but was humiliated instead. He returned to his former regions, having lost all that he gained and died shortly after.

i. After this defeat Antiochus III had an inglorious end. Needing money badly for his treasury, he resorted to pillaging a Babylonian temple and was killed by enraged local citizens.

9. (Dan_11:20) The brief reign of the succeeding king of the North.

There shall arise in his place one who imposes taxes *on* the glorious kingdom; but within a few days he shall be destroyed, but not in anger or in battle.

a. **There shall arise in his place:** After the inglorious end of the king of the North, his successor will raise taxes and meet a soon end.

b. This was fulfilled in the brief reign of Seleucus III, the eldest son of Antiochus III. He sought to tax his dominion (including the **glorious kingdom**, the Holy Land) to increase revenues. His plan to pillage the Jerusalem temple was set aside when his ambassador had an angelic vision of warning.

i. **Within a few days he shall be destroyed:** Seleucus III was assassinated, probably by his brother Antiochus IV.

C. Antiochus IV, known as Antiochus Epiphanes: *A Vile Person*.

1. (Dan_11:21) The **vile person** comes to power.

And in his place shall arise a vile person, to whom they will not give the honor of royalty; but he shall come in peaceably, and seize the kingdom by intrigue.

a. **In his place shall arise a vile person:** The angel told Daniel that after the brief reign of the former king of the North, the next king would be **a vile person**. He would not be recognized as **royalty**, but shall take power by **intrigue**.

b. This was fulfilled in the successor of Seleucus III, who was named Antiochus IV. He did not come to the throne legitimately because it was strongly suspected that he murdered his older brother, the previous king. The other potential heir (the son of Seleucus III) was imprisoned in Rome.

i. **He shall come in peaceably:** Apart from the murder of his older brother, Antiochus IV didn't use terror to gain power. He used flattery, smooth promises and **intrigue**.

ii. "He *flattered Eumenes*, king of Pergamus, and *Attalus* his brother, and got their assistance. He *flattered* the Romans, and sent ambassadors to court their favour, and pay them the arrears of the tribute. He *flattered* the Syrians, and gained their concurrence." (Clarke)

iii. Antiochus IV took the title "Epiphanes," meaning "illustrious." Others derisively called him "Epimanes," meaning "madman."

2. (Dan_11:22-27) The **vile person** fails to conquer the king of the South.

With the force of a flood they shall be swept away from before him and be broken, and also the prince of the covenant. And after the league *is made* with him he shall act deceitfully, for he shall come up and become strong with a small *number of people*. He shall enter peaceably, even into

the richest places of the province; and he shall do *what* his fathers have not done, nor his forefathers: he shall disperse among them the plunder, spoil, and riches; and he shall devise his plans against the strongholds, but *only* for a time. He shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the South with a great army. And the king of the South shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand, for they shall devise plans against him. Yes, those who eat of the portion of his delicacies shall destroy him; his army shall be swept away, and many shall fall down slain. Both these kings' hearts *shall be* bent on evil, and they shall speak lies at the same table; but it shall not prosper, for the end *will still be* at the appointed time.

a. **He shall act deceitfully:** The angel tells Daniel that the new king of the North (the *vile person* of Dan_11:21) will attempt a deceitful covenant with the king of the South. This will fail, and there will be a great battle that will not change the balance of power.

b. This was fulfilled when Antiochus Epiphanes carried on the feud between the dynasties but pretended friendship and alliance to catch them off guard. Despite massive efforts and epic battles, Antiochus Epiphanes did **not stand**, and **his army was swept away**.

i. The defeat of Antiochus Epiphanes at his second campaign against Egypt was important, because Egypt beat Antiochus with the help of Rome. At the end of it all, Antiochus Epiphanes and his kingdom were under the dominion of Rome.

ii. In a famous battle, the Roman Navy defeated the navy of Antiochus Epiphanes. After the battle, a Roman general drew a circle around Antiochus in the dirt and demanded to know if he would surrender and pay tribute to Rome - and demanded to know before he stepped out of the circle. From then on, there was no doubt: Antiochus Epiphanes took his orders from Rome and was under Roman dominion.

iii. **Those who eat of the portion of his delicacies shall destroy him:** This was fulfilled in the treachery against Antiochus IV by his own counselors.

3. (Dan_11:28-35) The **vile person** turns on the Holy Land with violence.

While returning to his land with great riches, his heart shall be *moved* against the holy covenant; so he shall do *damage* and return to his own land. At the appointed time he shall return and go toward the south; but it shall not be like the former or the latter. For ships from Cyprus shall come against him; therefore he shall be grieved, and return in rage against the holy covenant, and do *damage*. So he shall return and show regard for those who forsake the holy covenant. And forces shall be mustered by him, and they shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily *sacrifices*, and place *there* the abomination of desolation. Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong, and carry out *great exploits*. And those of the people who understand shall instruct many; yet *for many* days they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering. Now when they fall, they shall be aided with a little help; but many shall join with them by intrigue. And *some* of those of understanding shall fall, to refine them, purify *them*, and make *them* white, *until* the time of the end; because *it is* still for the appointed time.

a. **His heart shall be moved against the holy covenant:** When the vile person returns to his land he will attack the land, people, and the temple of Israel. It will be a time of great courage and great treachery among the people of God.

b. This was fulfilled when Antiochus Epiphanes returned from Egypt, bitter from defeat. He vented his anger against Jerusalem, which was already reeling because Antiochus sold the office of High Priest and persecuted the Jewish

people to conform to Greek culture, forsaking the faith and traditions of their fathers.

i. **While returning to his land with great riches:** Failing in his invasion of Egypt, Antiochus Epiphanes returned home with only great plunder to salve his wounded pride.

ii. **Ships from Cyprus shall come against him:** This was naval assistance from the Romans, who helped the Egyptians turn back Antiochus Epiphanes.

iii. **They shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation:** Antiochus Epiphanes set up an image of Zeus at the temple altar. He demanded sacrifice to this image, and later desecrated the temple by sacrificing a pig on it. "It was in truth an abomination, which brought a desolate condition to the Temple, for now no one would come to worship at all." (Wood)

iv. **Those who do wickedly against the covenant he shall corrupt with flattery; but the people who know their God shall be strong:** When Antiochus Epiphanes turned on Jerusalem the Jewish people were divided. Some forsook their covenant with God and embraced Greek culture. Those who knew their God made a stand for righteousness in the face of incredible persecution.

v. **For many days they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering:** In his attack on Jerusalem Antiochus IV is said to have killed 80,000 Jews, taken 40,000 more as prisoners, and sold another 40,000 as slaves. He also plundered the temple, robbing it of approximately \$1 billion.

vi. **Until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time:** This terror could only last for as long as God had appointed it and God had a purpose even for such persecution and blasphemy.

D. The Antichrist: the "last days Antiochus Epiphanes."

1. (Dan_11:36) "The willful king": a shift to a future fulfillment.

Then the king shall do according to his own will: he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done.

a. **He shall exalt and magnify himself above every god:** The angel explained to Daniel that this king will blaspheme God and exalt himself until **the wrath has been accomplished** and **what has been determined shall be done**.

b. Here we shift from what *was* fulfilled in the Ptolemies and the Selucids to what *will* be fulfilled in the Antichrist, the final world dictator. Daniel was told that this revelation pertained to *the latter days* (Dan_10:14), and Dan_11:36 begins to look more towards this final world dictator, who is sort of a “last days Antiochus Epiphanes.”

i. We know that everything about this prophecy was not fulfilled during the career of Antiochus Epiphanes. Jesus specifically said the *real* abomination of desolation was still in the future (Mat_24:15). The Apostle Paul paraphrased Dan_11:36 in reference to the coming Antichrist: *Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.* (2Th_2:3-4)

ii. Antiochus Epiphanes is important, but mostly as a historical preview of the Antichrist. This is why so much space is given to describing the career of one evil man - because he prefigures the ultimate evil man. Antiochus Epiphanes is the “trailer” released well before the Antichrist, who is like the “feature.”

c. **He shall exalt and magnify himself above every god:** Antiochus Epiphanes certainly did this in the general sense that all sinners oppose God. Yet he remained loyal to

the Greek religious tradition, which revered the entire Olympian pantheon. Antiochus Epiphanes put a statue of Zeus in the temple, not of *himself*. This will be far more precisely fulfilled in the Antichrist, who *sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God*. (2Th_2:4).

d. **Shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished**: Antichrist will do much damage, but he is on a short chain and will only work into God's plan. God's purpose will be **accomplished**.

2. (Dan_11:37-39) The character and authority of the "willful king."

He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall exalt himself above *them* all. But in their place he shall honor a god of fortresses; and a god which his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and pleasant things. Thus he shall act against the strongest fortresses with a foreign god, which he shall acknowledge, *and* advance *its* glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and divide the land for gain.

a. **He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women**: Based on this, some Bible scholars believe that the Antichrist will be of Jewish descent, and perhaps will also be a homosexual. These things may not be popularly known about the man, but they may be true nonetheless.

i. But many commentators believe that **the desire of women** refers to Jesus, in that all women desired the honor of bearing the Messiah and understanding "desire" as it is used in Hag_2:7. Seeing **the desire of women** as Jesus makes most sense in light of the flow of context.

b. **He shall honor a god of fortresses**: The Antichrist will take and hold power with military might and the shrewd use of great riches.

3. (Dan_11:40-45) The final conflict.

At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter the countries, overwhelm *them*, and pass through. He shall also enter the Glorious Land, and many *countries* shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon. He shall stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. He shall have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt; also the Libyans and Ethiopians *shall follow* at his heels. But news from the east and the north shall trouble him; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many. And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the seas and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him.

a. **At the time of the end:** The angel described to Daniel a confederation of kings coming against this great leader, with a battle in and near the Holy Land.

b. Prophetically speaking, a precise identification of peoples mentioned is difficult. The **king of the South** may be Egypt or represent the Arab community. The **king of the North** may be the Antichrist's domain (as the "new Antiochus Epiphanes") or it may be Russia.

i. The precise points may be cloudy, but the general idea is clear. The end will be marked by great conflict, culminating in the world's armies gathering at the Promised Land to do final battle.

c. **Yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him:** In the end there is no hope for the Antichrist or for any of his followers.

(Dan 11:3) Then a powerful king⁶ will arise, exercising great authority and doing as he pleases.

(Dan 11:4) Shortly after his rise to power,⁷ his kingdom will be broken up and distributed toward the four winds of the sky⁸ — but not to his posterity or with the authority he

exercised, for his kingdom will be uprooted and distributed to others besides these.

(Dan 11:5) "Then the king of the south⁹ and one of his subordinates¹⁰ will grow strong. His subordinate¹¹ will resist¹² him and will rule a kingdom greater than his.¹³

(Dan 11:6) After some years have passed, they¹⁴ will form an alliance. Then the daughter¹⁵ of the king of the south will come to the king of the north to make an agreement, but she will not retain her power,¹⁶ nor will he continue¹⁷ in his strength.¹⁸ She, together with the one who brought her, her child,¹⁹ and her benefactor will all be delivered over at that time.²⁰

(Dan 11:7) "There will arise in his²¹ place one from her family line²² who will come against their army and will enter the stronghold of the king of the north and will move against them successfully.²³

(Dan 11:8) He will also take their gods into captivity to Egypt, along with their cast images and prized utensils of silver and gold. Then he will withdraw for some years from²⁴ the king of the north.

(Dan 11:9) Then the king of the north²⁵ will advance against the empire of the king of the south, but will withdraw to his own land.

(Dan 11:10) His sons²⁶ will wage war, mustering a large army which will advance like an overflowing river and carrying the battle all the way to the enemy's²⁷ fortress.²⁸

(Dan 11:11) "Then the king of the south²⁹ will be enraged and will march out to fight against the king of the north, who will also muster a large army, but that army will be delivered into his hand.

(Dan 11:12) When the army is taken away, the king of the south will become arrogant.³⁰ He will be responsible for the death³¹ of thousands and thousands of people,³² but he will not continue to prevail.

(Dan 11:13) For the king of the north will again muster an army, one larger than before. At the end of some years he

will advance with a huge army and enormous supplies.

(Dan 11:14) "In those times many will oppose³³ the king of the south.³⁴ Those who are violent³⁵ among your own people will rise up in confirmation of³⁶ the vision, but they will falter.

(Dan 11:15) Then the king of the north will advance and will build siege mounds and capture a well-fortified city.³⁷ The forces of the south will not prevail, not even his finest contingents.³⁸ They will have no strength to prevail.

(Dan 11:16) The one advancing against him will do as he pleases, and no one will be able to stand before him. He will prevail in the beautiful land, and its annihilation will be within his power.³⁹

(Dan 11:17) His intention⁴⁰ will be to come with the strength of his entire kingdom, and he will form alliances.⁴¹ He will give the king of the south⁴² a daughter⁴³ in marriage in order to destroy the kingdom, but it will not turn out to his advantage.

(Dan 11:18) Then he will turn his attention⁴⁴ to the coastal regions and will capture many of them. But a commander⁴⁵ will bring his shameful conduct to a halt; in addition,⁴⁶ he will make him pay for his shameful conduct.⁴⁷

(Dan 11:19) He will then turn his attention to the fortresses of his own land, but he will stumble and fall, not to be found again.

(Dan 11:20) There will arise after him⁴⁸ one⁴⁹ who will send out an exactor⁵⁰ of tribute to enhance the splendor of the kingdom, but after a few days he will be destroyed,⁵¹ though not in anger or battle.

(Dan 11:21) "Then there will arise in his place a despicable person⁵² to whom the royal honor has not been rightfully conferred. He will come on the scene in a time of prosperity and will seize the kingdom through deceit.

(Dan 11:22) Armies⁵³ will be suddenly⁵⁴ swept away in defeat⁵⁵ before him; both they and a covenant leader⁵⁶ will be destroyed.⁵⁷

(Dan 11:23) After⁵⁸ entering into an alliance with him, he will behave treacherously; he will ascend to power with only a small force.⁵⁹

(Dan 11:24) In a time of prosperity for the most productive areas of the province he will come and accomplish what neither his fathers nor their fathers accomplished. He will distribute loot, spoils, and property to his followers, and he will devise plans against fortified cities, but not for long.⁶⁰

(Dan 11:25) He will rouse his strength and enthusiasm⁶¹ against the king of the south⁶² with a large army. The king of the south will wage war with a large and very powerful army, but he will not be able to prevail because of the plans devised against him.

(Dan 11:26) Those who share the king's fine food will attempt to destroy him, and his army will be swept away;⁶³ many will be killed in battle.

(Dan 11:27) These two kings, their minds⁶⁴ filled with evil intentions, will trade⁶⁵ lies with one another at the same table. But it will not succeed, for there is still an end at the appointed time.

(Dan 11:28) Then the king of the north⁶⁶ will return to his own land with much property. His mind will be set against the holy covenant.

He will take action, and then return to his own land.

(Dan 11:29) At an appointed time he will again invade the south, but this latter visit will not turn out the way the former one did.

(Dan 11:30) The ships of Kittim⁶⁷ will come against him, leaving him disheartened.⁶⁸ He will turn back and direct his indignation against the holy covenant. He will return and honor⁶⁹ those who forsake the holy covenant.

(Dan 11:31) His forces⁷⁰ will rise up and profane the fortified sanctuary,⁷¹ stopping the daily sacrifice. In its place they will set up⁷² the abomination that causes desolation.

(Dan 11:32) Then with smooth words he will defile⁷³ those who have rejected⁷⁴ the covenant. But the people who are loyal to⁷⁵ their God will act valiantly.⁷⁶

(Dan 11:33) These who are wise among the people will teach the masses.⁷⁷ However, they will fall⁷⁸ by the sword and by the flame,⁷⁹

and they will be imprisoned and plundered for some time.⁸⁰

(Dan 11:34) When they stumble, they will be granted some help. But many will unite with them deceitfully.

(Dan 11:35) Even some of the wise will stumble, resulting in their refinement, purification, and cleansing until the time of the end, for it is still for the appointed time.

(Dan 11:36) "Then the king⁸¹ will do as he pleases. He will exalt and magnify himself above every deity and he will utter presumptuous things against the God of gods. He will succeed until the time of⁸² wrath is completed, for what has been decreed must occur.⁸³

(Dan 11:37) He will not respect⁸⁴ the gods of his fathers — not even the god loved by women.⁸⁵ He will not respect any god; he will elevate himself above them all.

(Dan 11:38) What he will honor is a god of fortresses — a god his fathers did not acknowledge he will honor with gold, silver, valuable stones, and treasured commodities.

(Dan 11:39) He will attack⁸⁶ mighty fortresses, aided by⁸⁷ a foreign deity. To those who recognize him he will grant considerable honor.

He will place them in authority over many people, and he will parcel out land for a price.⁸⁸

(Dan 11:40) "At the time of the end the king of the south will attack⁸⁹ him. Then the king of the north will storm against him⁹⁰ with chariots, horsemen, and a large armada of ships.⁹¹ He⁹² will invade lands, passing through them like an overflowing river.⁹³

(Dan 11:41) Then he will enter the beautiful land.⁹⁴ Many⁹⁵ will fall, but these will escape:⁹⁶ Edom, Moab, and the Ammonite leadership.

(Dan 11:42) He will extend his power⁹⁷ against other lands; the land of Egypt will not escape.

(Dan 11:43) He will have control over the hidden stores of gold and silver, as well as all the treasures of Egypt. Libyans and Ethiopians⁹⁸ will submit to him.⁹⁹

(Dan 11:44) But reports will trouble him from the east and north, and he will set out in a tremendous rage to destroy and wipe out many.

(Dan 11:45) He will pitch his royal tents between the seas¹⁰⁰ toward the beautiful holy mountain. But he will come to his end, with no one to help him.

(Dan 12:1) "At that time Michael,

the great prince who watches over your people,¹

will arise.²

There will be a time of distress

unlike any other from the nation's beginning³

up to that time.

But at that time your own people,

all those whose names are⁴ found written in the book,

will escape.

(Guzik)

Dan 12:1-13

DANIEL 12 - ISRAEL'S TIME OF TROUBLE

A. The time of trouble destined for Israel.

1. (Dan_12:1 a) A future **time of trouble** for Israel.

At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands *watch* over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, *even* to that time.

a. **At that time**: This does not mean that what is described in Dan_12:1 is subsequent to the happenings of Dan_11:36-45.

It means what is described happens in the same era.

b. **Michael shall stand up**: The angel **Michael** is often associated with spiritual battle (Dan_10:13; Dan_10:21, Jud_1:9, Rev_12:7). Since Michael is called *the archangel* (Jud_1:9), he is Satan's true opposite. Satan is not the opposite of Jesus; he is the opposite of Michael, this high-ranking angel.

c. **The great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people**: In addition to his role as a spiritual warrior, Michael has a special job in protecting Israel. God has appointed Michael as a "spiritual guardian" over Israel.

d. **There shall be a time of trouble**: This refers to the time of persecution for Israel and world calamity known as the Great Tribulation. This period is also called *the time of Jacob's trouble* in Jer_30:7.

e. **Such as never was since there was a nation, even to that time**: The Jewish people have known many a **time of trouble** through their history. From the horrors at the fall of Samaria and Jerusalem to the terrors wrought by Antiochus Epiphanes to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans to the persecutions from the church during the Dark Ages to the pogroms of Europe to the 20th Century Holocaust, it often seems that all Israel's history has been a **time of trouble**. But this **time of trouble** will be different. This will be a *worse time of trouble* than Israel has ever seen before.

i. Jesus quoted this passage in Mat_24:21 : *For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the*

beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. With great sadness, we must say that the Bible teaches that the worst has yet to come for Israel and the Jewish people.

ii. This phrase “establishes its connection with the final or ‘great’ tribulation above mentioned, for there can manifestly be only *one* ‘time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time.’”

(Newell)

iii. What will make this time terrible? Rev_12:13-17 describes the fury of the devil directed against the Jewish people during this time. The trumpets, seals, and bowls of Revelation all described the horrific conditions of the world in general during this time. The Jewish people will be targets of the full fury of the devil and his antichrist during this time, and will live in a world that is in incredible upheaval because of the judgment of God.

iv. “The Jew has always been a target of Satan. He has sought to destroy them because he knew that God has ordained to accomplish His purposes through this nation. And thus Satan has attempted in times past to destroy the nation of Israel in order to thwart the purposes of God.”

(Smith)

2. (Dan_12:1 b) A promise of deliverance.

And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book.

a. **And at that time you people shall be delivered:**

Despite the terrors of that time, deliverance is assured. No matter how great the attack is against the Jewish people, God has promised to preserve them. He will never break His promise to Abraham: *And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you.* (Gen_17:7) b. Yet this promise of deliverance is not for every last person of Jewish heritage, but for **every one found written in the book.**

Not every person of Jewish heritage will be saved, yet Israel

as a whole will be known as a people who trust in Jesus as their Messiah, and truly turn to the Lord (Rom_11:25-27).

B. The resolution of resurrection.

1. (Dan_12:2) The resurrection of the dead.

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame *and* everlasting contempt.

a. **Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake:** Some think this is the resurrection of Israel as a *nation*. But the plainest meaning is that it refers to the resurrection of the body.

b. **Some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt:** The Bible clearly teaches two resurrections, one for the saved and one for the damned (Joh_5:29; Rev_20:4-6; Revelation 11-15). If we really believed *every one of us will live forever*, it would profoundly change our lives.

i. **Everlasting contempt:** The terror of hell never ends. There is not blissful annihilation after some period of punishment. This passage denies a rising doctrine within the church, a modified annihilationism that teaches that unjustified sinners are sent to Hell, and they suffer torment for a while, but then their beings perish for eternity.

ii. Rev_20:10 also certainly describes *eternal* punishment for the Devil and the Antichrist. "There would be no way possible in the Greek language to state more emphatically the everlasting punishment of the lost than here in mentioning both day and night and the expression 'forever and ever,' literally 'to the ages of ages.'" (Walvoord) iii. Logically, Hell *must* be eternal, because it is where imperfect beings must pay a continual penalty for their sins, because they cannot ever make a perfect payment. Principles behind Old Testament sacrifice remind us that an *imperfect* payment for sins must be a *continual* payment for sins.

c. **Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake:** Are there only **many** resurrected? There is

evidence that the Hebrew word for **many** in Dan_12:2 can also be used for “all.” “The emphasis is not upon many as opposed to all, but rather on the numbers involved.” (Baldwin)

i. As well, the Bible states that all are raised but not all at the same time or in the same manner (Rev_20:5-6).

ii. “The wicked also shall ‘come forth,’ but by another principle, and for another purpose; they shall come out of their graves like filthy toads against this terrible storm.” (Trapp)

2. (Dan_12:3) A promise for the righteous.

Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.

a. **Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament:** Those who live in God’s wisdom will **shine**. Despite all the calamity, all the difficulty coming upon Israel, God has **those who are wise**, and they **shall shine!**

b. **And those who turn many to righteousness like the stars:** Here, the wise among God’s people are those who **turn many to righteousness**.

i. All God’s people are like **stars** in the sense that they radiate light and help others to see and find their way. But certainly, those **who turn many to righteousness** shine even more brightly, helping even more people to see the light and find their way.

ii. This promise applies to all the wise, and all of those who **turn many to righteousness** through all ages. But it may have its most specific application to the 144,000 evangelists from Israel’s tribes during the Tribulation (Revelation 7).

c. **Forever and ever:** The brightness of God’s wise ones, and those who **turn many to righteousness**, will last forever.

It isn’t fading. It endures, when so many other things that we put our effort into, even if they succeed, give have an only

temporary “shine.” It’s worth it to invest our lives into the things that last **forever and ever**.

C. Conclusion of the book.

1. (Dan_12:4) Instructions to seal the book.

“But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.”

a. **Shut up the words, and seal the book:** To **shut up the words** implied that the words should be kept safely until the time when they were needed. **Seal the book** has the double sense of authenticating the message and preserving it.

b. **Until the time of the end:** Daniel’s prophecy certainly was of some value in his own day. But there would come a day, **the time of the end**, when his prophecy would be of even more importance. Therefore, it was important to **shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end**.

i. “We must wait ‘till the time of the end;’ and this, it appears from the following calculations, will not arrive before the TWENTIETH CENTURY. We here see the reason why these prophecies are at present so imperfectly understood. *God has sealed them.*” (Adam Clarke, 1825)

c. **Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase:** Here, Daniel is describing a characteristic of **the time of the end**. Many take this prediction as being fulfilled in the travel (**run to and fro**) and information explosions (**knowledge shall increase**) of our modern age.

i. **Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase:** This has more the idea of *searching after knowledge* than *rapid forms of transportation*.

ii. “The idea is that people would run about trying to find answers to important questions, especially in reference to future events.” (Wood)

iii. “The correct sense is that ‘many shall search it through and through,’ and that as a consequence ‘knowledge of the

book itself shall be increased.” (Newell)

d. Daniel has revealed enough to us so that the book really can be sealed. From Dan_11:36 to Dan_12:3, we see:

- A world ruler, utterly opposed to God

- A world religion, based on the abomination of desolation

- A world war, which defeats the ruler

- A time of great tribulation for Israel lasting three and one-half years

- Deliverance for the people of God after the tribulation

- Resurrection and judgment

- The reward of the righteous

2. (Dan_12:5-7) How long will the time of trouble be?

Then I, Daniel, looked; and there stood two others, one on this riverbank and the other on that riverbank. And *one* said to the man clothed in linen, who *was* above the waters of the river, “How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders *be*?” Then I heard the man clothed in linen, who *was* above the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever, that *it shall be* for a time, times, and half *a time*; and when the power of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these *things* shall be finished.

a. **Two others, one on this riverbank and the other on that riverbank:** Daniel is back to the **riverbank** first mentioned in Dan_10:4. The visions of Daniel 10 through 12 have all taken place as Daniel stood at this **riverbank**.

b. **One said to the man clothed in linen . . . “How long shall the fulfillment of these wonders be?”** Seemingly, these other men on the riverbank were angels. One angel is asking the other, not for the benefit of the angel, but for Daniel’s benefit and our benefit.

c. **Held up his right and his left hand to heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever:** In a solemn oath, one angel announces that the time of trouble will last three and one-half years (**a time, times, and half a time**).

- i. The prediction is *emphasized* by the solemn oath, and by a miracle happening what it was spoken: **who was above the waters in the river**. The angel “walked on water” when he told the other angel and Daniel that these things would happen within a three and one half year period.
- d. This three and one-half year period (here described as **a time, times, and half a time**) is well known in other passages of Biblical prophecy.

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Dan_7:25 describes it as the period that saints are given into Antichrist's hands

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Dan_9:27 describes it as the period between the breaking of Antichrist's covenant with Israel, the erection of the abomination of desolation, and the establishment of Jesus' kingdom

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Dan_12:7 describes it as the duration of “the time of trouble” for Israel

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Rev_11:2 describes it as the period that the holy city will be tread underfoot by Gentiles

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Rev_11:3 describes it as the period of ministry for the two witnesses

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Rev_12:6; Rev_12:14 describes it as the period that Israel (perhaps only its remnant) is preserved by God in the wilderness

Rev_13:5 describes it as the duration of Antichrist's authority to rule, persecute and blaspheme i. Taking all these together, we are obviously dealing with the last half of Daniel's seventieth week (the Great Tribulation); and we know very little about the first half.

e. **When the power of the holy people has been shattered, all these things shall be finished:** the people of Israel will seem completely crushed as these things end, but at that time, the Messiah – upon whom they will trust before He returns – will return to rescue them.

3. (Dan_12:8) Daniel's last question: how will it all turn out? Although I heard, I did not understand. Then I said, "My lord, what *shall be* the end of these *things*?"

a. **Although I heard, I did not understand:** this comforts us. Daniel didn't understand it all either, even though he heard it first hand!

b. **What shall be the end of these things?** Perhaps Daniel asked this question, anxious because he understood just how terrible the time of trouble would be.

4. (Dan_12:9-13) Answer: God will purify and preserve His people, and has set a limit of days to the time of trouble.

And he said, "Go *your way*, Daniel, for the words *are* closed up and sealed till the time of the end. Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand. And from the time *that* the daily *sacrifice* is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, *there shall be* one thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed *is* he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days. But you, go

your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.”

a. **Go your way, Daniel:** The command to **go your way** is literally merely “to go” but it is not meant physically. The angel is telling Daniel to make a mental departure from the questioning. More details would be revealed later; Daniel must be content with what God has revealed thus far.

b. **For the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end:** Daniel must make a *mental* departure from his questioning, because the revealing of these things will not come **till the time of the end**. Until then, there is a sense in which these prophecies **are closed up and sealed**.

i. We shouldn’t think there was no instruction, no blessing, no benefit in these words for any generation until the **time of the end**. But the meaning of these prophecies would be *less* mysteries at **the time of the end**.

ii. The massive interest in prophecy, and the incredible development in understanding of Biblical prophecy in the last 150 years should make us see that we truly are at **the time of the end**.

iii. One of the common arguments against some understandings of Biblical prophecy is “Your ideas are new. The early church or Christians through the ages didn’t teach these things. Your ideas are wrong because they are new.”

But this word to Daniel, that **the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end** should make us think differently.

iv. Additionally, when we look at Church history, we see that God has successively had the church focus on specific areas of doctrine at different periods. Our present understanding of many areas of Biblical teaching were only most carefully and precisely defined *after* God appointed the church to focus on that doctrinal area.

v. For example, in the second through fourth centuries, the church focused on the doctrine of Scripture. In the fourth

century, the focus was on the doctrine of God (in the Trinity). In the fifth century, the focus was on the doctrine of Christ. In the fifth through seventh centuries, the focus was on the doctrine of man. In the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, the focus was on the doctrine of salvation. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the focus was on the doctrine of the church. So it should not surprise us that it was not until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries - **the time of the end** - that the focus would turn upon the doctrine of last things and the return of Jesus.

c. **Many shall be purified, made white, and refined:** This is another prediction for what was future to Daniel, because this degree of purification is only possible *after* the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

d. **But the wicked shall do wickedly:** Most specifically, we would say that this prediction has to do with the end times, when wickedness will abound more than ever (as in the Antichrist and his government), but an innumerable multitude will also be saved (as is seen in Rev_7:9-10).

e. **And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days:** This is an amazingly specific prophecy. Daniel says that from the time of the **abomination of desolation**, you can simply start marking off your calendar to the final consummation of all things, 1,290 days later.

i. This is why Jesus pointed to Daniel's prophecy of the **abomination of desolation** as *the sign* that would mark the immediacy of His return (Mat_24:15).

f. **Blessed is he who waits, and comes to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days:** What is the relation between three and one-half years (1,260 days, mentioned specifically in Rev_11:3 and Rev_12:6), the 1,290 days mentioned here, and the 1,335 days mentioned here?

i. It is difficult to be certain. We could say that at the end of the 1,260 days Jesus returns. At the end of the 1,290

days, Jesus' government is officially installed. At the end of the 1,335 days the nations are judged (Mat_25:31-46).

ii. "It is quite possible that this period of judgment of those that have lived through the tribulation period and have survived somehow during this holocaust when God's judgment will be poured out upon the earth, when they are brought to stand before Jesus at this judgment, that this judgment of the Lord will take a forty-five day period."

(Smith)

g. **But you, go your way till the end:** Daniel's mind was filled with exciting and frightening prophetic thoughts. It might have been easy for those things to become a distraction to him instead of a blessing to him. So the angel concludes with an important reminder: **go your way till the end**. God had a course He wanted Daniel to complete, and Daniel needed to remain focused on *that*.

i. Adam Clarke draws the following points from Dan_12:13 :

- Every man has his **way** to go
- Every man has an **end**
- There is a **rest** provided for the people of God
- There is an **inheritance** for the people of God

ii. At the end of the gospel of John, Jesus told Peter about his destiny to die as a martyr for Jesus. Peter wanted to know about John's destiny, so he asked Jesus, "What about John?" Essentially, Jesus replied, "It's none of your business. *You follow Me.* " (Joh_21:22) In the same way, Daniel was not to spend all his time and energy speculating and worrying about things he couldn't know. Instead, he should simply obey the word to **go your way till the end** - something we must all do.

(Dan 12:2) Many of those who sleep

in the dusty ground will awake —

some to everlasting life,

and others to shame and everlasting abhorrence.⁵

(Dan 12:3) But the wise will shine

like the brightness of the heavenly expanse.

And those bringing many to righteousness

will be like the stars forever and ever.

(Dan 12:4) "But you, Daniel, close up these words and seal the book until the time of the end. Many will dash about,⁶ and knowledge will increase."

(Dan 12:5) I, Daniel, watched as two others stood there, one on each side of the river.⁷

(Dan 12:6) One said to the man clothed in linen who was above the waters of the river, "When will the end of these wondrous events occur?"

(Dan 12:7) Then I heard the man clothed in linen who was over the waters of the river as he raised both his right and left hands to the sky⁸ and made an oath by the one who lives forever: "It is for a time, times, and half a time. Then, when the power of the one who shatters⁹ the holy people has been exhausted, all these things will be finished."

(Dan 12:8) I heard, but I did not understand. So I said, "Sir,¹⁰ what will happen after these things?"

(Dan 12:9) He said, "Go, Daniel. For these matters are closed and sealed until the time of the end.

(Dan 12:10) Many will be purified, made clean, and refined, but the wicked will go on being wicked. None of the wicked will understand, though the wise will understand.

(Dan 12:11) From the time that the daily sacrifice is removed and the abomination that causes desolation is set in place,¹¹ there are 1,290 days.

(Dan 12:12) Blessed is the one who waits and attains to the 1,335 days.

(Dan 12:13) But you should go your way¹² until the end.¹³ You will rest and then at the end of the days you will arise to receive¹⁴ what you have been allotted."¹⁵